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OR

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By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or
all of these the Vision of the Paramatman is Obtained.

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Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 91

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No. 11

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

'Truth is one: sages call It by various names'

ब्रह्म जज्ञानं प्रथमं पुरस्ताद्वि
सीमतः सुरुचो वेन आवः ।
स बुध्न्या उपमा अस्य विष्ठाः
सतश्च योनिमसतश्च वि वः ॥

The Supreme Brahman projected at the beginning [of creation] the First Born¹ [symbolized by] the sun (Vena)² whose light (*surucah*) spread (*āvah*) up to the boundaries (*sīmatah*) [of the world]. By his illumination (*budhnyā*)³ he reveals the depths (*upamā*) of the source (*yoni*) of the manifested (*satah*) and the unmanifested (*asatah*) universe⁴.

Atharva-Veda 4.1.1

इयं पित्र्या राष्ट्रचेत्वग्रे
प्रथमाय जनुषे भुवनेष्ठाः ।
तस्मा एतं सुरुचं ह्वारमह्यं
धर्मं श्रीणन्तु प्रथमाय घास्यवे ।

The Queen,⁵ the primordial creation of the Father⁶, pervades the universe. We offer her this oblation of virtuous actions ; may she bless us.

Atharva-Veda 4.1.2

* The Atharva-Vedic hymn given here is widely used in marriage ceremonies, *upākarma* and other domestic rites.

1. Hiranyagarbha or Cosmic Soul. In the Upaniṣads the sun is spoken of as the symbol of Virat and 'the Person-in-the sun' as Hiranyagarbha.

2. The real meaning of the word *Vena* is obscure. Western scholars take it as the name of a Rṣi, seer. *Vena* seems to come from the root *vi* which means to shine. Yāska in his *Nirukta* interprets it as 'source of beauty' (*veno venateh kantikarmanah*). In the present context Sāyaṇa interprets *Vena* to mean the midday sun.

3. Derived from the root *budh*, 'to kindle'. Sāyaṇa takes *budhnyā* to mean the sky.

4. By taking *Brahma* to mean Śabda Brahman (Logos) and *Vena* to mean Vāk (the Word or Goddess of speech) the whole first stanza may be interpreted differently as follows: 'The *vāk* arose out of the primordial Sound-Brahman and, through the awakened intuition, reveals the boundaries of the manifested and the unmanifested universe.'

5 and 6. The 'Queen' is the Word or Goddess of Speech ; 'Father' is Śabda Brahman.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Last month's editorial discussed the social aspects of education and the pedagogical theories of well-known educationists. This month's, EDITORIAL deals with the role of education in an individual's life as an aid to the attainment of fulfilment and freedom.

PURNA CHANDRA GHOSH by Swami Chetanananda, spiritual head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, U.S.A., is an inspiring account of the life of one of the beloved lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

In ASCENDING THE BODHISATTVA'S ALTAR OF COSMIC SACRIFICE Swami Atmarupananda

discusses with great clarity and erudition the main spiritual practices of a Bodhisattva. This is the second of a series of articles on Mahayana Buddhism planned by the author who is a monastic member of the Vedanta Society of Southern California.

Meera Chakravorty is a lecturer in Sanskrit at Bangalore University, but is apparently quite at home in sociological thought as well. Her article MARXIAN PRAXIS AND NISHKAMA KARMA is a brief but clear exposition of an important subject which deserves the attention of scholars and thinkers.

EDUCATION AND TOTAL DEVELOPMENT OF MAN

(EDITORIAL)

Two types of education

Speaking about the strength of character of the Blackfoot tribe of American Indians, who were formerly the bravest of warriors, the famous psychologist Abraham Maslow once made a remarkable statement: 'If you watched to see how they developed this, I think it was through greater respect for their children.' What did he mean by 'showing respect for children?' Maslow explains his remark with the help of the following anecdote:

I can remember a little (Blackfoot Indian) baby, a toddler, trying to open a door to a cabin. He could not make it. This was a big, heavy door and he was shoving and shoving. Well, Americans (whites) would get up and open the door for him. The Blackfoot Indians sat down there for half an hour while that baby struggled with that door, until he was able to get it done for himself. He had to grunt and sweat, and then everyone praised him because he was able

to get it done himself. I would say that the Blackfoot Indian respected the child more than the American observer.¹

What would appear as insensitiveness or hard-heartedness in a more sophisticated society was a natural way of encouraging self-development in the Blackfoot Indian community. For a human child growth does not mean mere physical growth, but the development of its inherent capacities and potentialities. This inner development is of the nature of the unfolding of the self. That is to say, true development is self-development.

Self-development is to some extent a natural process going on in all children. Most children, if left to themselves, like the 'Red' Indian toddler mentioned above, will

1. Abraham H. Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) p. 221.

learn many things on their own initiative. The chief purpose of education is, or should be, to facilitate self-development. But most systems of education ignore self-development, or may even obstruct it. In self-development the initiative always comes from within. But most systems of education try to influence development from outside by hammering in knowledge or by manipulating external factors. John B. Watson, one of the chief exponents of behaviourism in psychology, confidently asserted: 'Give me two babies, and I will make one into this and one into the other.'

Commenting on this, Abraham Maslow writes:

If we look at education in our society, we see two sharply different factors. First of all, there is the overwhelming majority of teachers, principals, curriculum planners, school superintendents, who are devoted to passing on the knowledge that children need in order to live in our industrialized society.... Their chief concern is with efficiency, that is, with implanting the greatest number of facts into the greatest possible number of children, with a minimum of time, expense and effort. On the other hand, there is the minority of humanistically oriented educators who have as their goal the creation of better human beings, or in psychological terms, self-actualization and self-transcendence.²

Maslow calls the two types of education indicated above 'extrinsic' and 'intrinsic' respectively. In extrinsic education the emphasis is on external factors such as books, curriculum, work, economic benefits, etc. It leads to what David Riesman termed 'other-directed' development.³ In intrinsic education the emphasis is on internal factors such as self-knowledge, attitude, temperament, fulfilment etc. It

leads to what Riesman termed 'inner-directed' development.

Development constitutes only one of the two main aspects of life. The other aspect is adaptation. For animals and plants adaptation means adaptation to the factors of the physical environment such as climate, terrain, the food-chain etc., and most living beings exist in a state of equilibrium with their environment. But for man adaptation means *adjustment* to a highly unstable social environment. This environment is an extremely complex web of inter-personal relationships which is controlled by various psychological, economic, social and political forces. Since these forces are ever changing, the establishment of an equilibrium, *adjustment*, with the social environment is a very difficult task. The more industrialized, urbanized and sophisticated human society becomes, the greater becomes the problem of adjustment.

One of the important purposes of education is to help a person to adjust himself to the society of which he is a part. In extrinsic education this adjustment is sought through the manipulation of external factors, men and materials. It teaches a person how to earn more money by learning some skills, how to attain higher social status by manoeuvring others, how to win the approval of other people by being polite and tactful, and so on. When carried out to extreme limits, this kind of education ends up in collectivization and communism. But most people soon realize that this kind of external adjustment is an endless and futile effort and leads only to the impoverishment of inner life, unfulfilment and meaninglessness. On the contrary, in intrinsic education adjustment is sought through the transformation of the self. It is the recognition of the importance of the self in both development

2. *ibid* p. 173.

3. Cf. David Riesman, et al, *The Lonely Crowd* (New York: Anchor Book/Doubleday, 1953).

and adjustment that forms the basis of intrinsic education.

Importance of the self

It is therefore important to know how the self is related to external objects and events and what part the self plays in one's own life and aspirations. These have been admirably summarized by the psychologist Clark Moustakas in the form of the following principles:

1. The individual knows himself better than anyone else.
2. Only the individual himself can develop his potentialities.
3. The individual's perception of his own feelings, attitudes and ideas is more valid than any outside diagnosis can be.
4. Behaviour can best be understood from the individual's own point of view.
5. The individual responds in such ways as to be consistent with himself.
6. The individual's perception of himself determines how he will behave.
7. Objects have no meaning in themselves. Individuals give meanings and reality to them. These meanings reflect the individual's background.
8. Every individual is logical in the context of his own personal experience. His point of view may seem illogical to others when he is not understood.
9. As long as the individual accepts himself, he will continue to grow and develop his potentialities. When he does not accept himself, much of his energies will be used to defend rather than to explore and actualize himself.
10. Every individual wants to grow toward self-fulfilment. These growth strivings are present at all times.
11. An individual learns significantly only those things which are involved in the maintenance or enhancement of the self. No one can force the individual to permanent or creative learning. He will learn only if he wills to. Any other type of learning is temporary and inconsistent with the self and will disappear as soon as the threat is removed.
12. Concepts, ideas, symbols and events can be denied or distorted but experience is experienced in the unique reality of the individual

person and cannot be untrue to itself. If it threatens the maintenance or enhancement of the self, the experience will be of little relevance or consequence to the individual though it may temporarily stifle further growth.

13. We cannot teach another person directly and we cannot facilitate real learning in the sense of making it easier. We can make learning for another person possible by providing information, the setting, atmosphere, materials, resources and *by being there*. But the learning process itself is a unique individualistic experience. It may be a difficult experience for the individual person even if it has significance for the enhancement of the self.

14. Under threat the self is less open to spontaneous expression; that is, is more passive and controlled. When free from threat the self is more open; that is, free to be and strive for self-actualization.

15. Individual and social interests are not antagonistic but synergetic. Creative individual expression, that is, expression of one's own intrinsic nature, results in social creativity and growth which in turn encourage and free the individual to further self-expression and discovery.⁴

In fine, the self occupies a pivotal place in development, adjustment and in learning and experience. Intrinsic education directly deals with the self and brings about all desirable results through the transformation of consciousness. Most of the modern systems of education are extrinsic in character and do not deal with the self directly. Their sole purpose is the attainment of success, not the enhancement of human value or the enrichment of human personality.

Success is not the goal

What is meant by success in modern times? Competitive success. A successful person is one who competes successfully with his fellow-men. In the struggle for

4. Clark Moustakas, 'True Experience and the Self' in *The Self—Exploration in Personal Growth*, ed. Clark Moustakas (New York: Harper and Bros., 1956) pp. 9-13.

the existence of the ego, a person with a stronger and more ruthless ego will succeed. Some social scientists have held that competition is a necessary process in human evolution. The hollowness of this argument has been exposed by no less a person than Einstein himself. Einstein has pointed out that Darwin's theory of Natural Selection applies to the species as a whole and has nothing to do with the struggles within the species. To quote him:

Darwin's theory of the struggle for existence and the selectivity connected with it has by many people been cited as authorization of the encouragement of the spirit of competition. Some people also in such a way have tried to prove pseudo-scientifically the necessity of the destructive economic struggle of competition between individuals. But this is wrong, because man owes his strength in the struggle for existence to the fact that he is a socially living animal. As little as a battle between single ants of an ant-hill is essential for survival, just so little is this the case with the individual members of a human community.⁵

Competition produces anxiety in the individual, and attachment to sense objects leads to impoverishment of inner life and feelings of meaninglessness and emptiness. As has been pointed out by the existentialist psychologist Rollo May,

The weight placed upon the value of competitive success is so great in our culture and the anxiety occasioned by the possibility of failure to achieve this goal is so frequent that there is reason for assuming that individual competitive success is both the dominant goal in our culture and the most pervasive cause for anxiety.⁶

In modern society success is measured in economic terms. A person who earns more money, enjoys more fame and power

or sense pleasure is usually regarded as a successful person, even though he may be inwardly impoverished. But such a person only *takes away more* from universal life and hence his value to the society as a whole is less. A person who is valuable to society is one who *contributes more to* universal life. Einstein himself, with that deep insight so characteristic of him, has made this observation:

Therefore one should guard against preaching to the young man success in the customary sense as the aim of life. For a successful man is he who receives a great deal from his fellowmen, usually incomparably more than corresponds to his service to them. The value of a man, however, should be seen in what he gives and not in what he is able to receive.⁷

However, in order to contribute something valuable to universal life a person must first of all attain a high degree of self-fulfilment and enrichment of personality. True gift is the gift of oneself. All highly creative people like spiritual men, poets, novelists, scientists and musicians give themselves away through their creative work for the common wealth of humanity. And they do it not out of self-interest but as self-sacrifice, *yajña*, under the compulsion of some higher universal urge.

Attainment of a high degree of inner enrichment and fulfilment, and contribution to universal life far in excess of what one receives from it—these, then, should be the two aims of meaningful life and hence of meaningful education. They constitute what modern psychologists call self-actualization.

Self-actualization

Development implies development of the whole personality. But this understanding entered western psychology only recently.

5. In *Thoughts on Education* (Bangalore: Bangalore University, 1974) p. 83.

6. Rollo May, *Meaning of Anxiety* (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1950) p. 153.

7. *Thoughts on Education*, op. cit., p. 84.

Until the post-War period psychologists were conducting studies only in certain isolated aspects of development. The famous Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget for instance, focused his attention chiefly on the learning process. He found that the mode of thinking of a child was different from that of the adult. According to him the intellectual development of a child passes through the following four stages. 1. Sensory-motor stage (from birth to 2 years) during which the child's knowledge consists only of sensations. 2. Preoperational stage (2-7 years) in which the child learns to classify objects and the use of language. 3. Concrete operational stage (7-11 years) in which the child masters thinking operations and applies them to concrete objects. 4. Formal operational stage (11-14 years) in which the child learns to apply logical rules to abstract thinking. At this stage the child can think almost like an adult, only he lacks the adult's experience.

On the other hand, Freud and his followers focused their attention only on emotional development. According to Freud, emotions derive their driving power from a primary instinctual energy called libido, and it is the direction of the development of libido that determines the emotional life of a man. He conceived libido development as taking place in four stages. 1. Diffuse stage in which libido has no definite focus. 2. Autoerotic stage (3-5 years) when libido is focused upon the child itself. 3. Homosexual (5-13 years) when libido is directed towards other children of the same sex. 4. Heterosexual (13 onwards) when libido is directed towards persons of the opposite sex. When this developmental flow of libido is obstructed at any stage (through an *unconscious* process which Freud called 'repression') it produces serious difficulties in the emotional life of the adult. These ideas of Freud were popularized by child specialists and

paediatricians like Benjamin Spock, and have considerably influenced parental attitudes towards children in western societies. There may be some truth in Freud's basic discoveries, but his doctrine of free expression of instinctual drives as the solution to emotional problems has only created more problems. As Abraham Maslow says, 'The days in which Freud treated overinhibited people are now long past, and today we are confronted with the opposite problem—that of expressing every impulse immediately.'⁸

The present trend in psychological thinking is to regard development as a total process involving the whole personality. It is also being recognized that in this total development the unconscious plays a vital, positive and constructive role. Freud's chief mistake was that he regarded the unconscious as nothing but a storehouse of evil. But through the efforts of Jung, Adler and 'humanistic psychologists' like Allport, Maslow, Carl Rogers and others, it is now being widely recognized that the unconscious is also the storehouse of all good tendencies including artistic creativity, religious striving and symbolization. This recognition has led to the view that basic factor in human development is the actualization of the full potential of the unconscious most of which remains unknown and unavailable to ordinary people. It is the tapping and harnessing of the creative, life-giving powers of the unconscious that humanistic psychologists have termed self-actualization.⁹ In addition to this, their concept of total development

8. *Farther Reaches*, op. cit., p. 184.

9. The term 'self-actualization' was originally introduced by Kurt Goldstein and Karen Horney and popularized by Maslow and Carl Rogers. It is a more appropriate word than the older term 'self-realization' used by Karl Marx and others.

is also based on the following presuppositions regarding the nature of man.

1. Uniqueness of the individual. This does not mean merely that everyone is different from everyone else. What it really means is that the very fact of being man endows a person with a unique value and dignity. Every man is a centre through which universal life expresses itself in a unique way.

2. Wholeness of personality. The uniqueness of the individual lies not in one particular part of the personality like the colour of the skin or the beauty of the nose, but in his total personality. Human personality is one whole, although it may have different levels or dimensions. The whole personality functions as one autonomous unit. When something wrong happens within this system, it corrects itself. Just as physical diseases are cured through autocorrective immunological processes, so also mental problems are solved through autocorrective psychological processes.

3. Sense of freedom. In spite of all limitations and bonds, every individual has deep within him a sense of freedom. This inherent freedom manifests itself outwardly as rebellion, protest, claim to civic liberties etc., and internally as 'existential freedom'. Existential freedom includes the freedom to choose, freedom to preserve one's unique individuality, and freedom to seek higher value fulfilment.

4. Value fulfilment. Every person has what Maslow calls 'basic needs', which are organized in a hierarchical order. According to Maslow, the lower basic needs are: (a) physiological needs such as hunger, etc; (b) need for safety; (c) need for love and belongingness; and (d) the egoic need for self-esteem. If these lower needs are not fulfilled, it may lead to serious disorders such as neurosis. Then there are higher needs which include the creative urge and

cognitive, aesthetic and ethical goals.¹⁰ These higher needs belong to the category of values and ideals. The urge for value fulfilment is one of the most distinctive attributes of humanity. Says another psychologist, 'Without ideals man is not fully human, for the essence of humanness is the capacity to envision and actualize ideal ends.'¹¹ The urge to realize ideals, to seek value fulfilment is a higher form of creativity (contrasted with procreation which is the lowest form of creativity) and when this creative urge is dammed up or 'repressed', it can lead to personality problems such as meaninglessness, boredom and unfulfilment. In highly evolved people the higher needs become so dominant that they often sacrifice lower needs for the fulfilment of higher needs. Their primary concern is to attain psychological maturity and full manhood and to let their faculties and talents issue forth freely through some creative activity for the welfare of humanity. This is what is meant by self-actualization.

Man cannot attain full manhood unless his higher needs are fulfilled, that is to say, unless his faculties and capacities as a human being are developed to the fullest extent and are utilized in the service of fellow-men through creative work. This development of complete manhood, the full dimension of humanity, should be the chief aim of education. As Lawrence Kubie pointed out in his 'The Forgotten Man in Education', the one ultimate goal of education is to help the person become a human being, as fully human as he can possibly be.¹² Decades ago Swami Vivekananda spoke of the need for 'man-making education'.

10. Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1970).

11. Hubert Bonner, *On Being Mindful of Man* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965) p. 7.

12. Cited in *Farther Reaches*, op. cit., p. 51.

Conditions of man-making education

The aim of man-making education is to develop what Carl Rogers has termed 'the fully functioning person'. This does not, however, mean that everyone can attain the same degree of development through education—a false assumption which is implied in modern systems of education. No, everyone cannot be made into an Einstein, a Mahatma Gandhi or a Vivekananda merely through education. Each person is endowed with certain potentialities which vary from person to person. A person can develop only what he is endowed with, nothing more. But if he fails to develop whatever he is endowed with, his life will remain incomplete and his capacity to contribute to the collective welfare of humanity will be limited.

It is now widely accepted that the present-day systems of education do not aim at man-making or self-actualization. They aim chiefly at economic security and, sometimes as an additional goal, social adjustment. However, for a 'fully functioning person' economic security or social adjustment is a minor issue and no problem at all. If education is to become a means of creating such individuals, it should be organized as a system of personal guidance based on the following principles.¹³

1. Authenticity. This means, to be what you really are, to be without masks. Family and social conditions often force children to pretend to be richer than they really are, to be more intelligent, more learned, more virtuous, happier than they really are.¹⁴ The result of these pretensions

is the building up of a false adult self, which puts on so many masks that it is difficult for most people to know who they themselves really are. Without understanding the workings of your mind you cannot understand what exactly you are seeking in life or what the causes of your failure in life are. And if you do not understand yourself, how can you expect other people to understand you?

If we want to make our lives authentic we must first of all have adequate self-knowledge, that is, knowledge of the workings of the unconscious and knowledge of the configuration of the ego. Secondly, we must learn to accept ourselves with all our drawbacks and weaknesses. And then we should throw away the masks of egoism one by one. All this can be taught in childhood itself by a wise parent or teacher.

2. Trust in one's being. The human organism is the most highly evolved and most delicately orchestrated system in the whole universe. It is fully sustained by Prakṛti, Universal Life. As the Gita says, every act and thought of ours is really done by Universal Life.¹⁵ Therefore we must have trust in our body, in the unknown unconscious, in the power of our faculties, in our higher aspiration, in our deepest urges for fulfilment. Children have this trust naturally present in them but, as they grow up, they gradually lose it. And for this the ignorant handling by parents and teachers and the educational system itself are mainly responsible, although social

¹³. Some of these principles have been discussed in a masterly way by Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961).

¹⁴. A striking instance of authenticity in childhood is provided by the story of Satyakāma Jābāli in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (4.4.1-5). The

boy frankly told his teacher that his mother was a maid-servant who begot him while working in different homes, and so he did not know his lineage. The teacher greatly appreciated the authenticity shown by the boy and accepted him as a worthy disciple.

¹⁵. प्रकृत्यैव च कर्माणि क्रियमाणानि सर्वशः ।

Gītā 13.29

oppression or political subjugation under an alien power may be a contributory factor. Lack of self-trust blocks the channels of creativity and makes us waste lots of energy in futile efforts and self-defensive postures. Swami Vivekananda was never tired of telling people, 'Have faith in yourself'. To have faith in oneself really means to have trust in Universal Life.

3. Integration. One of the major problems of modern man is alienation—alienation of his thinking process from his feelings, alienation of his work from his deepest aspirations, alienation of his lower self from the higher Self. The removal of these three types of alienation is what is meant by integration of personality. Integration is a continual process. Conflicts, critical situations, frustrations and betrayals tend to break us apart now and then, and so a constant process of reintegration must be kept up all through our life.

4. Awakening to higher ideals and values. Ideals and values become the core of our lives only when the soul opens itself to them. This opening is of the nature of an awakening. A few children experience this awakening spontaneously in the course of their growing up and, when it happens, their lives, attitudes and behaviour-patterns get totally transformed. This awakening can be created in a few other children by teachers who have themselves experienced this awakening. The greatest need of present-day education is for teachers who can awaken the minds of children. Ideals and values taught through sermons and textbooks, or picked by children from their social environment through a process which psychologists call 'introjection', will influence only the outer fringes of the childrens' lives.

5. Freedom to choose one's own creative vocation. Creativity is not an isolated activity like writing a poem or

painting a picture. It is the conversion of one's whole life into a channel for the creative energies of Universal Life. For a truly creative man his whole life is a perpetual oblation, *yajña*, into Universal Life. It is through this self-sacrifice that he discovers some of the great truths and mysteries of life, any one of which may bring benefit to millions of people for centuries. This is what we find in the lives of highly creative men like Einstein and Faraday, Socrates and Śaṅkara, Mozart and Tyāgarāja, Marx and Gandhiji. Creative people do not adjust themselves to outer life; what they do is to convert their outer life into an expression of their inner life. Their vocation and their life constitute one single endeavour of self-actualization.

For self-actualization the choice of a vocation which is in full harmony with one's life and temperament is very important. If a person chooses a wrong vocation, all his creativity will get blocked. If self-actualization is to be the central purpose of education, the socio-economic conditions of a country must be such that it allows freedom to all its citizens to choose any profession they like. This freedom is practically non-existent in developing countries like India, and this explains why modern India has produced very few creative geniuses in the fields of arts or science. The only really creative people in India are the spiritual men that this poor country has been manufacturing from time immemorial.

This takes us to another factor in life which lies beyond the pale of ordinary education but which education should prepare us for: transcendence.

Transcendence

Almost all the richness of human culture and progress of civilization have resulted

from the contributions of a few creative individuals. At present every nation spends millions of dollars on education. But ninety per cent of those who receive education fail to contribute anything *new* to the ongoing processes of collective life; they are consumers, not contributors, and serve no more useful purpose in society than after-sales service men do in a business firm. Everything that is new, innovative and progressive is the work of a small number of self-actualizing people. At no other time in history has humanity stood in need of creative people as it does now. The rate of acceleration of accumulation of new scientific facts, of new inventions, of new technological developments, of new psychological happenings, of increased affluence and, above all, the communication explosion have created a totally different situation. To cope with this situation what the world today needs most is a larger group of people who can think differently, envision the future and actualize new possibilities. The creation of such people should be the prime concern of education especially in countries like India which remain poor not for want of wealth or education, but for want of enough number of self-actualizing individuals.

However, it is also true that self-actualization does not exhaust all the potentialities of man and, although it makes his life meaningful, it is not enough in itself to bring ultimate fulfilment and final freedom to the human soul. This is because the soul has a transcendent dimension known as the Atman or the Self. Ordinary development and self-actualization affect only the body and the mind. Atman is beyond the reach of the ordinary thinking process; it can be realized only by transcending the mind. The Atman is intrinsically free, self-luminous and blissful. It is the Atman that

gives rise to the notion of freedom. Self-actualization, however important it is, does not liberate the soul and fulfil its inherent urge for freedom. Complete freedom can be attained only through Self-realization, that is, the direct experience of the Atman. Furthermore, since the individual Atman is an inseparable part of the supreme Cosmic Self known as Brahman, only through Self-realization can man experience the basic solidarity of creation and understand the real basis of love and universal brotherhood.

Total development

Thus, self-actualization and Self-realization form the two dimensions of human development. Any scheme of education which aims at total development must include self-actualization as the proximate and immediate goal and Self-realization as the ultimate goal of life.

In recent history Swami Vivekananda stands as one of the best exemplars and exponents of the concept of total development. In his life he attained the highest degrees of self-actualization and transcendence. That he gave a central place to these two dimensions of development in his message is obvious from the fact that he had clearly formulated them in the form of two epigrams even at the very beginning of his preaching work in the West. These two epigrams, which are so often quoted but seldom studied, are: 'Education is the manifestation of the *perfection* already in man' and 'Religion is the manifestation of the *divinity* already in man.' Linguistically, these two definitions differ from each other only in the use of the two words 'perfection' and 'divinity'. By these two terms, it is clear, Swamiji meant two different things. Were it not so, education would be identical with religion and there would be no need for two definitions. Swami Vivek-

ananda was the last person to commit such a tautological error. It is therefore certain that he regarded education and religion as two different (although related) fields.

But what did Swamiji mean by 'perfection' and 'divinity'? There is ample evidence in his *Complete Works* to indicate that by 'perfection' Swamiji meant the powers inherent in Prakṛti, whereas by 'divinity' he meant the glory of the Puruṣa or Atman.

For instance, while commenting on Patañjali's Yoga Aphorism, 4.3, Swamiji says: 'But the great ancient evolutionist, Patañjali, declares that the true secret of evolution is the manifestation of the perfection which is already in every being.'¹⁶ It is clear that Swamiji has used the word 'perfection' here to mean the powers of Prakṛti. The water for irrigation of fields is already in the canal, only shut in by gates. The farmer opens these gates and the water flows in by itself by the law of gravitation. In the same way, the individual mind is only a part of Prakṛti,

and when the obstacles to knowledge are removed through education, knowledge flows spontaneously into the mind from Prakṛti. Thus education is unfolding of the perfection of Prakṛti potentially present in every human mind.

Divinity, on the other hand, refers to the transcendent dimension of the Atman. The true Self of man is uncreated, self-luminous and is of the same nature as God or Brahman of which it is an inseparable part. Therefore the individual Self is divine in its nature. In the state of bondage, this divinity remains in a potential state. The purpose of religious practices such as meditation, selfless work and devotion is to get rid of bondage. As the bonds are cut, the Self manifests its divinity more and more and, when complete liberation is attained, it becomes one with Brahman. Thus religion is an unfolding of the divinity already present in the soul.

Education conceived as self-actualization is the process by which the perfection of Prakṛti manifests itself, whereas religion conceived as Self-realization is the process by which the divinity of Atman manifests itself. Together they bring about the total development of man.

16. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977) vol. 1, p. 292.

They Lived with God

PURNA CHANDRA GHOSH

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

Most people do not realize how difficult it is for an avatar or for an illumined soul to listen to or talk about mundane things. Some even experience a painful sensation in their bodies when they have to listen to worldly talk. Because of this these great

souls long for spiritually-minded companions with whom they can communicate and share their feelings and experiences. Sri Ramakrishna had to wait nearly twenty-three years after his realization for his close disciples to come. He later described his

agony to some of the disciples:

I then felt an indescribable yearning to see all of you. The soul was being wrung like a piece of wet towel, so to speak, and I felt restless with pain. I felt like weeping, but I could not do so lest that should create a scene. I controlled myself somehow. But when the day came to an end and night approached and the vesper music began in the Mother's and Viṣṇu's temples, I could not control myself. I thought, 'One more day has passed away and they have not come.' I then got up on the roof of the 'mansion', and cried out, calling you loudly: 'O my children! Where are you? Come.' I felt I might go mad. Then after long waiting, you at last started coming one by one. Only then was I pacified. And as I had seen you all earlier, I could recognize you as you came, one after another. When Purna came, Mother said: 'With this the coming of those of whom you had visions is complete. No one else of this class will come in future.' (The name *Pūrṇa* literally means 'complete' or 'full').

Purna Chandra Ghosh was one of the six direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who were designated by the Master as *Īśvarakoṭis*, that is, great souls who are eternally free from the bonds of karma and who take birth of their own will to do good to mankind. The other five *Īśvarakoṭis* were Swamis Vivekananda, Brahmananda, Premananda, Yogananda, and Niranjanananda. Although Purna did not become a monk, he commanded much respect from the Master's devotees for his spirituality. On a number of occasions Sri Ramakrishna talked about Purna's real nature: 'Purna is a part of Nārāyaṇa and a spiritual aspirant possessing a high degree of sattva. In this respect he may be said to occupy a place just below Narendra (Vivekananda).' 'Purna was born with an element of Viṣṇu. I worshipped him mentally with bel leaves, but the offering was not accepted. Then I worshipped him with tulsi leaves and sandal paste. That proved to be all right.' (In Hindu ritualistic worship the leaves of bel tree are offered to Śiva,

whereas tulsi leaves and sandal paste are offered to Viṣṇu).

Purna was born either in the later part of 1871 or the early part of 1872 in a wealthy family of North Calcutta. His father, Rai Bahadur Dinanath Ghosh, was a high official in the Finance Department of the Government of India. His mother, Krishnamanini, was related to Balaram Bose, a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. Purna was a student at the Shyambazar branch of the Metropolitan Institution, a school founded by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. The headmaster of this school was M., the recorder of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Seeing Purna's bright, prominent eyes, fair complexion, well-built body, and sweet graceful countenance, M. sensed that he might have some spiritual aptitude. Out of affection he gave him some spiritual instructions and also lent him a copy of the *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, a Bengali biography of Śrī Caitanya. The boy read the book with great interest and was deeply inspired by Caitanya's life and teachings.

One day in March 1885, M. said to Purna, 'Would you like to see a saint like Śrī Caitanya?' Purna immediately said, 'Yes.' He was then just thirteen years old and in the eighth grade. Purna's relatives were a problem, however. Since they were rich aristocrats, Purna knew that they would consider it beneath their dignity for him to visit or associate with an ordinary temple priest. They were also very strict disciplinarians. For this reason M. devised a plan to take Purna to the Master secretly, during the school hours. One day he hired a carriage, and they both left school for Dakshineswar.

The Master immediately recognized Purna's divine nature and treated him as one belonging to his own inner circle. At that first meeting he fed Purna with his own hands like an affectionate mother, and gave him some spiritual instructions.

Purna was so overwhelmed that he was reluctant to leave, but M. reminded him that they would have to return before school was over. The Master said to Purna: 'Come here whenever you find an opportunity. You will get your carriage fare from here.'

There are many obstacles and pitfalls in spiritual life. But even these can be turned to a spiritual aspirant's advantage by increasing his longing and determination, and strengthening his relationship with God. There is a saying, 'Love becomes intensified by troublemakers.' Such was the case with Purna. Purna wanted to visit the Master again, but he was afraid that his parents would find out about it. Meanwhile, Sri Ramakrishna's heart was also crying for Purna. The Master secretly began to send sweets, fruits, and other things to Purna through some devotees. One day he cried bitterly for Purna in front of the devotees and said to them: 'You are amazed to see me thus attracted towards Purna. I don't know how you would have felt had you seen the longing that arose in my heart when I first saw Narendra and how very restless I was on that occasion.'

Whenever Sri Ramakrishna was eager to see Purna, he would come to Calcutta at midday and would wait at Balaram's or someone else's house near Purna's school. He would then send somebody to bring Purna to him. Thus Purna's second meeting with the Master took place at Balaram's house. On that occasion the Master asked him, 'What do you think of me?' Filled with devotion, Purna replied without hesitation, 'You are God himself, come to earth in flesh and blood.' Sri Ramakrishna was delighted with his answer. He blessed Purna wholeheartedly and gave him some secret spiritual instructions along with a Mantra. After returning to Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna said to his disciples: 'Well, Purna is a mere boy and his intellect

has not yet matured. How then could he recognize me as an Incarnation of God? Under the impulse of divine impressions some other people also answered that question like Purna. It is definitely due to the good impressions accumulated during previous lives that the picture of untarnished truth spontaneously appears to their pure sattvic minds.'

Purna had a relative who lived near Dakshineswar, and once while visiting that family he had an opportunity to see the Master. Sri Ramakrishna invited him for lunch that day and instructed Holy Mother to cook some delicacies. Taking Purna to the *nahabat*, the Master introduced him to Holy Mother. Purna did not understand who she was, however. He thought that she was just a woman devotee of the Master's. Holy Mother fed him with great care and gave him a rupee according to the Master's direction. Purna accepted the money reluctantly. Only later did he find out that she was Sri Ramakrishna's wife.

Sri Ramakrishna once related a vision that he had just had about Purna:

Do you know what I saw just now in my ecstatic state? There was a meadow covering an area of seven or eight miles, through which lay the road to Sihore. I was alone in that meadow. I saw a sixteen-year-old Paramahansa boy exactly like the one I had seen in the Panchavati. A mist of bliss lay all around. Out of it emerged a boy thirteen or fourteen years old. I saw his face. He looked like Purna. Both of us were naked. Then we began to run around joyfully in the meadow. Purna felt thirsty. He drank some water from a tumbler and offered me what was left. I said to him, 'Brother, I cannot take your leavings.' Thereupon he laughed, washed the glass, and brought me fresh water.

On another occasion he said:

I want to tell you something very secret. Why do I love boys like Purna and Narendra so

much? Once, in a spiritual mood, I felt intense love for Jagannāth, love such as a woman feels for her sweetheart. In that mood I was about to embrace Him, when I broke my arm. It was then revealed to me: 'You have assumed this human body. Therefore establish with human beings the relationship of friend, father, or son.' I now feel for Purna and the other young boys as I once felt for Rāmlāla (a metal image of the boy Rāma)... Purna belongs to the realm of the Personal God... Ah, what yearning he has!

As a mother bird protects her babies by spreading her wings, so Sri Ramakrishna protected his young disciples and devotees from the temptations, trials and tribulations of life. At three o'clock in the afternoon of April 6, 1885, the Master reached Balaram's house. It was terribly hot that day, and the Master was exhausted from the trip. Seeing M., he asked, 'Why haven't you brought Purna?'

M: 'He doesn't like to come to a gathering of people. He is afraid you might praise him before others and his relatives might then hear about it.'

Master: 'Yes, that's true. I won't do it in the future.... Well, how do you find Purna? Does he go into ecstatic moods?'

M: 'No, I haven't noticed in him any outer sign of such emotion....'

Master: 'Purna will not show his emotion outwardly; he hasn't that kind of temperament. His other signs are good.... Did you ask him what he felt after meeting me?'

M: 'Yes, sir, we talked about that. He has been telling me for the last four or five days that whenever he thinks of God or repeats his name, tears flow from his eyes and the hair on his body stands on end—such is his joy.'

Master: 'Indeed! That's all he needs.'

It is very reassuring and encouraging to hear from the Master himself about his concern and love for his disciples. He said to M. about Purna: 'A great soul!

Or how could he make me do japa for his welfare. But Purna doesn't know anything about it.'

Purna's father soon learned about his son's association with Sri Ramakrishna and forbade the boy to see him anymore. But in spite of increased restrictions at home, Purna continued to meet the Master secretly whenever Sri Ramakrishna came to Calcutta. M. was the go-between and would convey the news to Purna of the Master's visits to Calcutta when he saw the boy at school. On April 12, 1885, Purna met the Master at Balaram's house. The Master was delighted to see Purna and the following conversation took place between them:

Master: 'Do you practise what I asked you to?'

Purna: 'Yes sir.'

Master: 'Do you dream? Do you dream of a flame? A lighted torch? A married woman? A cremation ground? It is good to dream of these things.'

Purna: 'I dreamt of you. You were seated and were telling me something.'

Master: 'What? Some instructions? Tell me some of it.'

Purna: 'I don't remember now.'

Master: 'Never mind. But it is very good. You will make progress. You feel attracted to me, don't you?'

The matter went too far, however. When Purna's relatives learned of his disobedience, they became furious and said to him, 'If you go to him (Sri Ramakrishna) we will smash his carriage with stones and brickbats when he comes to Calcutta.' They also took him out of M.'s school and sent him to another school. The news of Purna's transfer reached the Master and he began to worry about M. On June 13, 1885, the Master said to M.

Master: 'If I see Purna once more, then my longing for him will diminish. How intelligent he is! His mind is much drawn to me. He says, 'I too feel a strange sensation in my heart

for you.' They have taken him away from your school. Will that harm you ?'

M: 'If Vidyasagar tells me that Purna's relatives have taken him away from the school on my account, I have an explanation to give him.'

Master: 'What will you say ?'

M: 'I shall say that one thinks of God in holy company. That is by no means bad. Further, I shall tell him that the textbooks prescribed by the school authorities say that one should love God with all one's soul.'

One night Purna was studying alone in his room when he suddenly noticed M. standing outside near his window. He immediately came out, and M. whispered to him: 'The Master is waiting for you at the junction of Shyampukur Street and Cornwallis Street (now Bidhan Sarani). Please come with me.' The Master was extremely pleased to see Purna. He said: 'I have brought sandesh (a sweet) for you. Please eat it.' The Master fed Purna with his own hands. Overwhelmed with emotion, Purna began to cry. The three of them then went to M.'s house, where the Master gave Purna some instructions on spiritual disciplines.

In connection with this incident, Kumudbandhu Sen wrote an interesting reminiscence:

One evening I was talking to Purna about Girish's love and devotion for the Master. In the course of conversation I said, 'Last night Girish mentioned something wonderful.' Purna asked curiously, 'What did he say ?' I replied: 'Girish said: "Who could understand Sri Ramakrishna? Do you think the Master's disciples have understood him? But those who have tasted a drop of his love have realized that the Master's pure divine love was above the world and even beyond any paternal love. God can hide everything except his unbounded love. The disciples and the devotees get intoxicated tasting a little of that love. Otherwise, who, however great he may be, comprehend the infinite nature of God?"'

As soon as I told him what Girish had said, Purna's face became red and his eyes filled with

tears. Grabbing my hand, he took me from his room to the junction of Shyampukur Street and Cornwallis Street and said to me in a choked voice 'Here—here (I experienced that love of the Master).' I had never before seen Purna so emotional. Outwardly he had always been very calm and serious by nature. That night, when I saw his radiant face in the street light, I was speechless. He then said, his voice still choked with emotion: 'It is true. Girish is right. Who can understand the Master? Who can measure his unmotivated, unconditional love? I was a mere boy. What did I know about him? His superhuman love made me convinced that he was God incarnate.'

On July 15, 1885, Balaram asked the Master, 'Sir, how was it possible for Purna to know all of a sudden that the world is illusory?' Sri Ramakrishna replied: 'He has inherited that knowledge from his previous births. In his past lives he practised many disciplines. It is the body alone that is small or grows big, and not the Atman. Do you know what these youngsters are like? They are like certain plants that grow fruit first and then flowers. These devotees first of all have the vision of God; next they hear about his glories and attributes; and at last they are united with him.'

Practising spiritual disciplines without having love and longing for God is like eating curries that are without salt. Yearning is the only thing needful in spiritual life, and Purna got this precious trait in the beginning of his life. On July 13, 1885, M. told the Master: 'One day I was riding on a tram. He (Purna) saw me from the roof of his house and ran down to the street. With great fervour he saluted me from the street.' Sri Ramakrishna was overwhelmed to hear that. With tearful eyes he said: 'Ah! Ah! It is because you have helped him make the contact through which he will find out the supreme ideal of his life. One doesn't act like that unless one longs for God.'

How can one live in the world and at the same time keep one's mind on God? The scriptures have answered this vital question thus: 'A woman who is attached to a paramour will constantly have her mind on him, even though she is engaged in her household duties.' Likewise, one should establish a relationship with God and constantly think of Him. This is exactly what happened in Purna's life. His parents confined him to the house, but his mind dwelt on the Master. On August 29, 1885, the Master received a letter from Purna, in which he had written: 'I am feeling extremely happy. Now and then I cannot sleep at night for joy.' When the letter was read to the Master, he said: 'I feel thrilled to hear this. Even later on he will be able to keep this bliss. Let me see the letter.' He pressed the letter in the palm of his hand and said: 'Generally I cannot touch letters. But this is a good letter.'

Swami Abhedananda wrote an incident about Purna in his autobiography:

One day a young man named Purna Chandra Ghosh came to Dakshineswar. Seeing him, the mood of Gopāla (the child Kṛṣṇa) arose in Sri Ramakrishna's mind. The Master experienced great delight in feeding him. Purna was then a student of the Oriental Seminary. Knowing that the school was close to my house, the Master one day said to me: 'Purna is a good boy. He reminds me of Gopāla and I wish to feed him. When his school is over, invite him to your house and feed him sandesh (a type of sweet) which I shall give you.' I said, 'Yes, I will do that.' This made the Master very happy. He smiled and said, 'You will act as my messenger, just as Vṛnda (a *gopi*) acted as Rādhā's messenger to Kṛṣṇa.' Then he handed me a big mango and some sandesh. I carried them home according to the Master's instruction.

After school hours were over I met Purna and brought him to our home at Nimu Goswami Lane. With my own hands I fed him the mango and sandesh which the Master had given me for him. Purna ate them heartily and said

with tearful eyes: 'Ah! How kind and affectionate the Master is! His love and affection surpasses even that of our parents. The Master gave you so much trouble just to feed me!' From that time on Purna and I were very close. The next day I went to Dakshineswar and told the Master about Purna. He was delighted to hear my story.

In September 1885, Sri Ramakrishna had to move from Dakshineswar to Calcutta for his cancer treatment. Early in the morning of October 30, 1885, Purna visited the Master secretly. When M. arrived, the Master said to him, smiling: 'Purna came this morning. He has such a nice nature!' So far as the records show, the last time Purna saw Sri Ramakrishna was at the Cossipore garden house in April of 1886, a few months before the end of the Master's earthly life. Purna came in a hired carriage paid for by M.

After Sri Ramakrishna's passing away Purna became more withdrawn and indifferent towards the world. He sometimes visited the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, but this alarmed his parents. Fearing that Purna might also become a monk, they forced him to marry against his will. He was then only sixteen. His father was a high official in the Finance Department, and he was able to arrange a good job for Purna in the same department. Purna later held a high position there. Although he was thus engaged in his duties as a householder, whenever the devotees came to visit him he would talk only about the Master, or he would remain silent, a reverent listener to their conversation.

In Sri Ramakrishna's divine drama Purna's role was in the background. He simply led the life according to the Master's instructions. The other devotees and disciples of Sri Ramakrishna had much love and respect for him because of his extraordinary faith, reliance on God,

devotion, humility and selflessness. M. often sent some of his young students to Purna to get inspiration from his holy company. When Purna heard that someone was going to renounce the world and join the monastery, he would be delighted.

In 1893 the news of Swami Vivekananda's success in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago reached India. Purna would collect all the newspaper clippings he could find about him and bring them to Balaram Bose's house, where Swami Brahmananda and other direct disciples would meet together. After Purna read them aloud to the gathering, the monastic disciples would share Swamiji's letters with him. When Swami Vivekananda returned to Calcutta in 1897, Purna went to meet him at the Sealdah Railroad Station. He saw Swamiji from a distance, but the crowd was so big that he could not go near him. Returning home, he went to take a bath before leaving for his office. Just then Swami Vivekananda's carriage stopped in front of his house and Swami Trigunatitananda went inside to call Purna. Purna was overwhelmed. He immediately came out in wet clothes to bow down to Swamiji. 'Brother Purna, how are you?' asked Swamiji. Purna replied: 'Swamiji, by the grace of the Master I am fine. I saw you at the Sealdah Station from a distance. I came back and was taking a bath since I will have to go to the office.' 'Very well', said Swamiji affectionately, 'don't be in wet clothes long. Go to work and later see me at the monastery.' Purna joyfully agreed and bowed down to Swamiji again.

When Purna was thirty-five he became seriously ill and the doctors gave up hope for his life. One day during this critical period Swami Premananda came to see him. Sitting on Purna's bed, he became absorbed in a divine mood. Shortly after this Purna recovered. Swami Premananda

later said that the Master had extended Purna's life another seven years because his children were quite young.

Purna was an ideal father to his children, and he performed all the duties of a householder faithfully. He educated his children well and married his daughters in good families. He was kind and generous to his younger brothers and friends. Yet, in spite of his many family responsibilities and social commitments, he maintained a high spiritual mood.

In 1907 Purna was elected secretary of the Vivekananda Society of Calcutta, which had been founded in 1902, just after Swamiji's passing away. The society was then located on Shankar Ghosh Lane. Purna visited the society regularly and meditated in the shrine along with the other members. He was a great inspiration to the younger members and gave them advice like a friend. In 1911 Madame Calve, the famous French opera singer and devotee of Swamiji, visited Calcutta. The members of the Vivekananda Society, led by Purna, received her at the Grand Hotel and presented her with pictures of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Purna also arranged her visit to Belur Math. He could not continue his secretaryship of the Vivekananda Society for long, however, because his office was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi.

Although Purna's main office was in Delhi, he had to spend several months a year in Simla for official work. While there, he would go in the evening after office hours to a solitary place on a hill and spend some time in meditation. People seldom saw his spiritual emotion, as he had tremendous power to hold it within. But one day a devotee was singing devotional songs at Purna's Simla home. A friend noticed that tears were flowing from Purna's eyes and that they remained red for a long time. On another occasion,

when Purna was walking with a friend, he seemed to be absent-minded. The friend asked him if he had any body-consciousness or not. Touching his throat, Purna replied that he had consciousness above that point, but not below. This indicates that Purna was a *sthitaprajña*, a 'man of steady wisdom'.

Purna was calm, quiet and unostentatious by nature, but when necessary he could be outspoken and spirited. Once two English soldiers ill-treated some local people of Simla. Purna immediately protested and challenged the soldiers. He was very patriotic and had great appreciation for the freedom fighters of India. He strongly believed that Swamiji's life and message would inspire India's new generation.

Purna always maintained close contact with his brother disciples, even when he was living at Delhi or Simla. Once Swami Turiyananda, after visiting Kashmir, stayed for a while as Purna's guest in his Simla home. Whenever Purna was in Calcutta he would always visit Belur Math regularly. Once Swami Brahmananda, along with many monks and devotees, came to his Calcutta home when Purna arranged a festival. Some of his brother disciples were helped by him financially, and he also sent worship vessels and many other articles to Swami Trigunatitananda for the Vedanta Temple in San Francisco. A lifelong habit of study enabled Purna to write well in English, and he used his talents to contribute some valuable articles to the *Brahmavadin*, an English monthly started by Swami Vivekananda.

During Girish Ghosh's last illness in 1911, Purna visited him. Seeing Purna, a beloved disciple of the Master, Girish forgot his pain and suffering. Both talked about Sri Ramakrishna for some time, and when Purna was about to leave, Girish said to him: 'Brother, bless me so

that I may remember the Master with every breath. Glory to Sri Ramakrishna!' Purna humbly replied: 'The Master is always looking after you. Please bless us.' The next day Purna told a devotee that the Master would not keep Girish in this world much longer—Girish would very soon return to the Master. Purna's words came true.

Purna had a wealthy friend named Shyam Basu, who was related to Balaram Bose. Shyam Basu used to visit Purna quite often and would call him 'Guruji'. Although he was a sincere gentleman, his moral character was not good. One day a person mentioned Shyam Basu's shortcomings to Purna. At this Purna replied: 'It is true Shyam Basu has some defects like other ordinary people, but whatever he does, he does privately without dragging others into it. Yet he possesses a noble quality that is very rare, and that is his veracity. He keeps his word, remaining ever steadfast like the Himalayas. And if he sees anyone in difficulty, he comes forward to help without passing any judgement.' By the grace of the Master, Purna was free from the disease of faultfinding. Later, through Purna's influence, Shyam Basu's life was changed, and he became very much devoted to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

Each soul, like a tree, grows in its own way. It is often seen that a person who still has some desires feels unhappy living in a monastery. Similarly, a person whose mind is inclined towards the path of renunciation, and yet is forced to become a householder, cannot derive any happiness from married life. By the mysterious will of God, Purna had to marry. For the rest of his life he felt uncomfortable and out of place in the company of the worldly, because he had not been able to dedicate himself wholly to God. But though he had not taken any formal vows,

the spirit of renunciation was truly there.

Once Swami Shuddhananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, told a young man the following incident about Purna:

Please study *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* thoroughly. Those words came directly from the Master's lips. It is a wonderfully inspiring book. Listen to a story. Once Purna was passing through a very unhappy time and one day decided to commit suicide. He first took a bath and made himself ready. Then he thought: 'Let me read a page from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Taking the beautiful message of the Master I shall depart from this world.' He opened the book at random, and his eyes fell on these sentences: *Purna bālak bhakta. Thākūr Purner mangal cintā karitechen.* ('Purna is a young devotee. The Master was thinking of his welfare.') These words from the *Gospel* changed his suicidal plan. He felt great assurance that the Master was thinking of his welfare.

On July 13, 1885, Sri Ramakrishna had prophesied about Purna:

Purna is in such an exalted state that either he will very soon give up his body—the body is useless after the realization of God—or his inner nature will within a few days burst forth. He has a divine nature—the traits of a god. It makes a person less fearful of men. If you put a garland of flowers round his neck or smear his body with sandal paste or burn incense before him, he will go into Samādhi; for then he will know beyond the shadow of a doubt that Nārāyaṇa himself dwells in his body, that it is Nārāyaṇa who has assumed the body. I have come to know about it.

While he was living at Delhi, Purna contracted a fever which would not abate. Even a change to the exhilarating climate of the Simla hills did not help, but aggravated the disease all the more. However, Purna never lost his equanimity of mind. He knew that the Master was protecting him, and felt no fear, worry, or anxiety. One day, seeing his wife lamenting, he said to her: 'Are we like

ordinary mortals? We belong to the Master eternally and in every way. He who fed you before my birth will maintain you and protect you after my death.'

In order to receive better treatment Purna was brought from Simla to Calcutta, where he remained bed ridden for about six months before passing away. He endured all physical pain and suffering calmly, without any complaint. If anyone came to comfort him, he would cheerfully say: 'My Master, Sri Ramakrishna, is always seated at my bedside. I have no fear or worry.'

Purna's mother was extremely anxious for her son's life, so she repeatedly went to Holy Mother for her blessings. Holy Mother knew that Purna would not live long, but she could not tell that harsh truth to his mother. One day when Purna's mother came, Holy Mother said to her: 'What can I do, my dear? Ask the Master. He will make him well.' 'You can do it if you like, Mother.' 'No, I can only let him know.' After Purna's mother left, Holy Mother remarked: 'The Master told them (Purna's parents) that Purna would not live long if he were married, but she did not listen to him. She hurriedly arranged his marriage so that he could not be a monk.'

As the days passed Purna's body became more emaciated, and he was not allowed to leave his bed because of his extreme weakness. One night, finding that all were fast asleep, he went to the bathroom alone without disturbing anyone. It was his nature not to trouble anyone about himself. While returning to bed he became dizzy and nearly fell. The next day he told a close devotee: 'Who says that the Master does not exist? He is still living and I perceive him clearly. Last night, while returning from the bathroom, I was about to fall unconscious. The Master caught me in his arms and carried

me to bed. He is there, just as he was before, and I can see him.*

The death of an earth-bound soul is like a tug of war. His *prāṇa* (life-force) wants to leave the body, but his unfulfilled desires want the *prāṇa* to stay. Thus the struggle goes on. In Purna's case, however, it was clearly seen he did not feel any pain at the time of his death and that his mind was soaring high during his last hours. About 10.00 P.M. the physician examined him and reported to his relatives that his last hour was at hand. After the physician had left, the relatives thought that Purna was sleeping peacefully. Without disturbing him they waited for some time. The doctor came again about an hour and a half later, examined the body, and declared that Purna's vital

* There is another account of this incident: Purna actually fell down. His attendant heard the noise, got up, and carried him to the bed. When Purna was asked whether he was hurt or not, he replied: 'No, I am not hurt. I fell on the Master's lap.'

breath had left the body quite some time before. It was November 16, 1913.

Kanti Ghosh, Purna's younger brother, described Purna's passing away in a letter:

We could not believe that he was dead. On his final day he was very calm and seemed to be immersed in Samādhi. We were surprised when the doctor told us that he had died a couple of hours before. Even at that time the crown of his head was warm. I felt an atmosphere like that of a temple in his room. Another striking thing happened when his body was brought out from his room to the courtyard. At that time some large raindrops fell on his body, but not anywhere else. Moreover, it was a moonlit night.

Purna Chandra justified his name (*pūrṇa* means 'full'; *candra* means 'moon'). He was a stainless full moon, shedding beautiful, soothing light to all, imperceptibly. He was an unattached yogi, endowed with all divine qualities. Through Purna's life, Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated the synthesis of an ideal yogi and an ideal householder.

ASCENDING THE BODHISATTVA'S ALTAR OF COSMIC SACRIFICE

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

Sacrifice is an element fundamental to all religions. The form it takes differs according to the particular ideal and world-view taught by each religion, but in some form it is found universally.

Among many ancient peoples like the Indo-Aryans and early Jews, sacrifice consisted in offering material wealth to deities or ancestors out of thanksgiving, or with a hope of reward and protection, or from a sense of cosmic obligation. In Upaniṣadic times Vedic ritual sacrifice was replaced by

meditation and self-enquiry, in which the limited self was offered (sacrificed) as an oblation into the Supreme Self.¹

In later Purāṇic Hinduism there arose worship of the Personal God—a sacrifice of love ending in surrender of the self to the Beloved. Similarly in Christianity,

1. As an example there is *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad* 1.67: 'Melting, I am the light that shines. The light shines, I am Brahman. I who exist, I am Brahman. I am, I am Brahman. I myself offer my limited self [into the Light], *svāhā!*'

Jewish sacrifice was replaced by sacrifice of self out of love for God: 'And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.'²

Buddha was the first great teacher to direct this spirit of sacrifice towards man himself. As Swami Vivekananda said:

The religion of Buddha spread fast. It was because of the marvellous love which, for the first time in the history of humanity, overflowed a large heart and devoted itself to the service not only of all men but of all living things—a love which did not care for anything except to find a way of release from suffering for all beings.

Man was loving God and had forgotten all about his brother man. The man who in the name of God can give up his very life, can also turn around and kill his brother man in the name of God. That was the state of the world.... This was the first time they turned to the other God—man. It is man that is to be loved. It was the first wave of intense love for all men—the first wave of true unadulterated wisdom—that, starting from India, gradually inundated country after country, north, south, east, west.³

This spirit of universal love was preserved and enshrined in the Bodhisattva ideal, which developed gradually over several centuries after the Buddha's final Nirvāṇa.

A Bodhisattva is one who aspires after enlightenment not for himself alone but for the welfare of all beings: he vows to sacrifice his own final freedom until he has helped to usher all sentient beings into freedom first. From his very entrance into the path he is taught to seek the good of all beings, to perform all actions as a sacrifice for the welfare of all, to offer the merit of his actions to the

happiness of all. And once he has attained unexcelled supreme enlightenment (*anuttara-saṃyak-saṃbodhi*) he holds to an intense desire to help all other beings into freedom as well, a desire which he has kindled into an all-consuming fire of self-sacrifice over the whole course of his spiritual evolution. This enables him to retain an enlightened sense of personhood, so that he doesn't merge his individuality into Nirvāṇa forever at death. The path leading to this lofty state is known as the Bodhisattvayāna.

In a previous article we discussed the general spirit of the Bodhisattva ideal. Here we wish to outline the beginning steps of the path whereby one is imbued with the spirit of cosmic sacrifice.

First, before describing the path, it should be stated that Mahāyāna Buddhism, like all religions, passed through periods of spiritual strength and periods of degeneration. There were times when the ideal was strong, and other times of weakness. Sometimes the Buddhists became so carried away with analysis and classification that the path became hopelessly complex and dissociated from experience: description of the path became an intellectual exercise in elaborating maps of a country never seen rather than a translation of experience into language. In fact, the idea gained acceptance that the career of an aspiring Bodhisattva would take eons and eons to complete, realization in this life itself being not even a possibility. So the Bodhisattva began to postpone enlightenment and linger longer and longer in the world. At this point compassion became so dissociated from wisdom that it led at times to gross immorality: the eternal moral order could be ignored to satisfy the temporary and foolish desires of ignorant beings. But these were faults not of the ideal but of

2. Matthew 10:38-39.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 8 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977), pp. 99-100.

human weakness and a combination of historical factors.⁴

In this and a future article we will study the path in simple outline—the preliminary practices, *bodhicittotpāda*, the vow, *vyākaraṇa*, and the six *pāramitās*—rather than the more elaborate system of ten *bhūmis*, ten *pāramitās* and all the many subclassifications of qualities ultimately required of the aspirant.

The first step proper for the Bodhisattva is called *bodhicittotpāda*, but before this becomes possible there are three preliminaries.

Gotra

The first preliminary is not a virtue or a practice but entrance into the stage known as *gotra*. *Gotra* means 'lineage'. In Hindu society the three higher castes have from ancient times been divided into several *gotras* or lines of descent. All members of one *gotra* are supposed to have descended from a common ancestor—usually a *ṛṣi*, such as Bharadvāja or

Vasiṣṭha. One's *gotra* thus represents one's pedigree.

The Buddhists borrowed this term and applied it to those who renounce the world to enter the line of Buddhas; but the Buddhist *gotra* differs according to the aspirant, some belonging to the *gotra* of Arhats, some to that of the Pratyekabuddhas, and others to the line of Bodhisattvas. The distinguishing feature of the Bodhisattva's *gotra* is his aspiration to attain unexcelled supreme enlightenment, and thereby to save all beings from misery by leading them also to the haven of Bodhi, enlightenment.

Those belonging to the *gotra* of Śrāvakas or Arhats seek Nirvāṇa or extinction of selfhood in the Indescribable. So unspeakable is the nature of Nirvāṇa to the followers of the Arhats that often it seems more like cessation of existence than enlightenment. The Arhat's ideal and path are described primarily in world-negating terms: cessation of misery, destruction of the thirst for life, extinction of belief in any permanent selfhood, insight into the momentariness of all things, disconnection with the world of becoming (*Samsāra*). As long as his body lasts the Arhat seeks the good of other beings, but on death of the body he enters Parinirvāṇa or final extinction and is thus lost to the myriad sentient beings still bound to the wheel of birth and death.

Whereas the Arhat seeks the well-being of others as long as his body remains, the Pratyekabuddha is one who seeks his own enlightenment and passes into final Nirvāṇa without ever having taught the saving *dharma* to others.

One who has entered the *gotra* of the Bodhisattvas is characterized by certain qualities. He has turned his intention from the world towards the spiritual life. And though he may not have progressed noticeably on the path, he has made that

4. The democratic urge in the Buddhist movement—which came as a reform movement in India—carried the highest moral principles into all classes of Indian society, principles which before had been the preserve of the highest castes. It is this democratic aspect of Buddhism which appeals so strongly to Westerners. But it is rarely recognized that this same breaking down of the barriers of caste led to the terrible degeneration of Buddhism which almost brought ruin to Indian society. For though the lowering of caste-barriers allowed for the moralizing of the whole society, it eventually allowed primitive peoples to enter into the society with their superstitions and immoral practices, which brought about the opposite effect once the great wave of idealism had spent itself. For more about this, see Sister Nivedita's *The Web of Indian Life*, included in volume 2 of *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1967); also see Swami Vivekananda's lecture entitled 'Buddhistic India' in volume 3 (1973) of his *Complete Works*.

rare and all-important about-face—he has known that, even if he gains all that the world has to offer, still there will be no satisfaction ; only through spiritual illumination can he attain the joy beyond all sorrow. And that illumination requires renunciation. In fact, it requires renunciation even of the desire for individual enlightenment which is forgetful of others. With such conviction one enters the line of Bodhisattvas.

One is still bothered by desires, restlessness and failings ; but the important fact is that one has made a change in one's conscious orientation. Though the unconscious may yet urge the aspirant on to indulge his worldly tendencies, he does not consciously wish to submit to such promptings ; and under the influence of his new spirit of renunciation, he resists them. Thus begins his career of purification.

Adhimukti

The second preliminary is the development of *adhimukti* or aspiration.

What is it that enflames the will of the Bodhisattva, giving him the requisite aspiration to surmount all obstacles on the path ? For one following a devotional religion, it is the desire for God ; that is, the desire for the object of all love, the all-beautiful, the all-desirable, the ideal. What inspires the Bodhisattva to strive with this one-pointed devotion towards his ideal ?

It is a combination of two factors. First, a deep awareness of suffering. Perhaps the word 'suffering' doesn't do justice to the Sanskrit term *duhkha* in a Buddhist context. It is not that all relative life is out-and-out suffering, unrelieved by moments of happiness ; but even the greatest experiences of happiness and pleasure within Samsāra are *unsatisfactory*. So the first factor that generates aspiration in the Bodhisattva is a deep awareness of the

unsatisfactoriness of life.

The second factor is an intense desire to help other beings as well as oneself beyond the sea of sorrow.

The first factor is common to the Arhats as well as Bodhisattvas. And it is vitally important. Only if one is intensely aware of the suffering involved in transmigratory existence will one seek release. So the Bodhisattva meditates deeply on the unsatisfactoriness of life.

But the second factor is equally important—an intense desire to set all beings free from suffering. This is developed by the basic ethical practice of the Bodhisattva : renunciation of self-preoccupation combined with identification with others.⁵ As Śāntideva says in the first verse of his *Śikṣāsamuccaya* : 'When fear and misery are dear neither to me nor to others, what is special about me that I protect myself but not others ?'⁶

If my spiritual life is self-centred, concerned only with my own suffering, then I can all too easily become lax in practice for personal comfort's sake. If I don't feel like getting up early to meditate, well, I'm only hurting myself. But if I am concerned with the salvation of all beings, my responsibility has become vast : if I delay my spiritual destiny, I'm cheating myriads of sentient beings. And this is affirmed over and over again to the aspiring Bodhisattva.

So, based on his own awareness of suffering, the Bodhisattva tries to expand beyond the limits of selfhood and identify with the joys and sorrows of all beings, thus

5. *Atmabhavaparityaga* and *paratmaparivartana*.

6. यदा मम परेषां च

भयं दुःखं च न प्रियम् ।

तदात्मनः को विशेषो

यत्तं रक्षामि नेतरम् ॥

awakening a sense of cosmic aspiration.

Such an awakening is the actual purpose of the Tibetan discipline of *tum-mo* or yoga of the psychic fire. This practice nowadays is famous for its secondary result—the production of psychic heat which allowed Tibetan yogis to live on the icy heights of the Himalayas with nothing but a thin cotton cloth to cover themselves. But it was developed many centuries ago in India, where the last thing one needed was to produce more body heat.

In the central part of this practice the yogi visualizes his *sūṣumnā* as a fiery but extremely fine thread rising through his spinal column. Then he very slowly and gradually expands that fiery thread until his whole body is consumed in a fiery column of aspiration. Further, he slowly expands that column until it engulfs the whole universe in a cosmic conflagration, rising towards Bodhi. Finally he once again contracts it till it together with the universe and himself merges into the Void, which is the Dharmakāya or Ultimate Reality.⁷

Igniting something of this cosmic aspiration is *adhimukti*. That aspiration is further kindled and fanned until it is sufficient to lift the Bodhisattva on its flames to Bodhi.

Anuttarā Pūjā

As the devotional tendency in Mahāyāna Buddhism developed, a third preliminary was added: *anuttarā pūjā* or 'unexcelled worship'; that is, worship of the Buddhas and perfected Bodhisattvas. Through a worshipful spirit we make ourselves susceptible to the influence of all that is great and good, and indirectly free ourselves from the influence of all that is harmful.

We become similar to what we worship. Therefore the Bodhisattva offers loving worship—ritually through *pūjā* and mentally through prayer—to his ideals, the perfected Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Some may be surprised to learn that Mahāyāna Buddhism, which teaches a form of impersonal nondualism (*advayavāda*), emphasizes the need for prayer and worship. This surprise, however, is born of the common misconception that prayer and worship are necessarily dualistic in spirit. Actually, however, we find after even a little practice that they are our surest tools for drilling a hole through the shell of our individuality which separates us from cosmic life. Rather than fostering a separation from Truth, they establish a connection which—illuminated souls assure us—grows into union with Reality.

Through prayer and worship the Bodhisattva's mind is purified and his power to love is expanded. Through prayer and worship his spirit of service is developed and a worshipful spirit overflows into all that he does. Through prayer and worship his natural, childlike faith is released from the hold of fears and suspicions, a bridge of personal relationship with the Buddhas is built, and his self-image is gradually reshaped in the image of his ideals.

Bodhicittotpāda

Now the aspirant has readied himself through the preliminaries to enter the Bodhisattvayāna proper. He begins his actual career as a Bodhisattva through *bodhicittotpāda*: 'production (*utpāda*) of the thought (*citta*) of enlightenment (*bodhi*)'. What this means in spirit is the arising of the intention (*saṃkalpa*) to attain enlightenment for the sake of all beings. In other words, it isn't just the desire to attain enlightenment, which is common to all paths; but it is the intention to do so in order to have

7. See Anagarika Lama Govinda, *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974), pp. 160-61.

the power to ferry all beings across the sea of relative existence to liberation. This *bodhicitta* or thought of enlightenment is to be cultivated and intensified until it results in attainment.

Bodhicitta is the central fact of the Bodhisattva's career, and as such its arising has been lavishly praised in the Mahāyāna scriptures. Śāntideva in his justly famous *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says:

As a blind man might find a jewel in heaps of rubbish, so in some unexpected way the thought of enlightenment (*bodhicitta*) has arisen in me. This elixir is arisen for the destruction of the whole world's mortality; it is the imperishable treasure which takes away the poverty of all beings. This is the ultimate medicine for the world's disease, and tree which shelters all beings who are exhausted from wandering on the road of this world. It is the universal bridge for all travellers to cross over difficulties; the moon of the mind risen to dispel the *klesas*⁸ of the world. It is the brilliant sun which lifts the mist of the world's ignorance, and the butter which has arisen from the churning of the milk of the true *dharma*. Today in the presence of all the Protectors (Buddhas) the world is invited by me to [a banquet of] unsurpassable delight. May the gods, *asuras* and all rejoice.⁹

As already mentioned, when entering the *gotra* stage one makes the conscious decision to enter the line of Enlightened Ones, but the unconscious mind continues to flow in its accustomed, contrary course. When, however, one produces the thought of enlightenment, even the unconscious mind has become greatly purified. It now largely supports one's conscious aspiration. *Bodhicittotpāda* thus corresponds to the profound conversion described by many of

the Christian mystics. Except that there is this highly important distinguishing factor: *bodhicitta* invariably implies the firm and conscious intention to seek enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

Praṇidhāna

After the arising of *bodhicitta*, the Bodhisattva is ready to make a vow, known as *praṇidhāna*, to seek enlightenment for the sake of all beings. The purpose of this, as with any vow, is to strengthen one's resolve and to protect from backsliding: it formalizes one's commitment, since one is always in danger of giving up in the face of difficulties.

In the modern West there is a terrible fear of commitment to anything: to a career, to marriage, to monastic vows, to whatever. As so often happens, that weakness is made to pass as a virtue, and commitment is looked on with disgust as slavishness. But such modern 'virtues' are leading merrily to the death of Western society. Commitment generates the strength to face down all obstacles, the moral power to act on motives of principle rather than pleasure, the stability to stand firm amidst the fierce waves of worldly circumstance. Undoubtedly the highest commitment is commitment to Truth alone, with no other dependence. The strength necessary for such freedom, however, is not developed through a weak fear of commitment but by the strength gained through commitment to all that is noble. It's a matter of universal experience that a person without commitment to anything is a person without maturity and depth.

During the early period of the Mahāyāna the vow was quite simple. Then in the scholastic period, along with all else, the vow became very complex. But later it was again simplified. One traditional form of the vow is almost exactly the same as

8. Literally 'afflictions', the *klesas* are faults of character which disturb the mind. According to the Mahāyāna they are six: *rāga* (sense desire), *pratigha* (anger), *māna* (pride), *avidyā* (ignorance), *kudṛsti* (wrong views), and *vicikitsā* (doubt).

9. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 3.27-31, 33.

Swami Vivekananda's motto for the Ramakrishna Order, which is: 'For one's own liberation and for the welfare of the world.' The Bodhisattva's vow is: 'For the acquisition of enlightenment and for the welfare of the world.'¹⁰

Another beautiful form of the vow is: We having crossed, may we help living beings to cross! We being liberated, may we liberate others! We being comforted, may we comfort others! We being finally released, may we release others!¹¹

Perseverance in the vow is aided by three reflections: First, 'I have made a sacred promise to all being.' The seriousness and hence the inviolability of a vow increases in proportion to its loftiness. This vow of the Bodhisattva being, according to the Mahāyāna, the greatest possible of a human being, breaking it is unthinkable bad. For going back on it not only hurts oneself but cheats all living beings. So the Bodhisattva reflects on the solemnity and cosmic significance of his vow. A second reflection is: 'I belong to the family of Buddhas, and my behaviour will reflect on them.' By this reflection he becomes aware of his responsibility to those whom he loves most: the Perfected Ones. The third reflection arises as a result of the first two: 'I must be ever diligent and vigilant even in the face of great danger and temptation, and never give up *bodhicitta*.'

Vyākaraṇa

Some time during the Bodhisattva's career—in one lifetime or another—it is

expected that he declares his vow before a living Buddha, who makes a prediction of the aspirant's future success. This is known as the Bodhisattva's *vyākaraṇa* or *vyākṛti*, which means 'prediction'. Not all Buddhist writers give importance to *vyākaraṇa*; such authorities as Śāntideva don't mention it. But it is worth mentioning here because it shows that the Buddhists have recognized the major practical objection to the whole ideal of the Bodhisattva.

The general belief in the Vedāntic tradition has been that only a very select class of beings are capable of retaining a sense of enlightened personhood even after full, nondual illumination; they alone can be born again at will for the welfare of all beings. Membership in this class is not open: certain souls belong to it by their very nature; the vast mass of beings do not, and cannot aspire for it. These special souls were called *Īśvarakoṭis* by Sri Ramakrishna.

Ordinary *jīvas* or souls who approach the highest truth are said to be caught in such a tremendous urge for union that the thought of holding back for the sake of others is impossible: the call of Reality is too great. And after the highest illumination all that had constituted one's individual personhood is destroyed, leaving no foundation for any work in the relative world.

Swami Vivekananda himself—an *Īśvarakoṭi*—wanted to merge forever in Nirvikalpa Samādhi, for which Sri Ramakrishna scolded him: 'You are a small-minded person. There is a state higher even than that. "All that exists art Thou": it is you who sing that song.... You will attain a state higher than Samādhi.'¹² Sri Ramakrishna further said that the future Swami

10. Unfortunately the author is unable at present to find the original Sanskrit of the vow for a better comparison with Swami Vivekananda's motto, which too is originally Sanskrit.

11. The two forms of the vow quoted here are given in Har Dayal's *The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), pp. 65-67.

12. Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 1 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), p. 162.

was to be a great banyan tree under which many would find shelter. Yet even after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, the Swami tried repeatedly to merge in Samādhi, until he finally realized that, yes, he did have a mission to fulfil. Similarly the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi had an intense desire to leave the body after Sri Ramakrishna's Mahāsamādhi. But he appeared to her and convinced her that she too had much work to do.

It must have been a recognition of this practical problem which led to the idea of *vyākaraṇa*: a Bodhisattva must in some lifetime before final illumination declare his vow before a living Buddha and get a prediction of future success. Later Buddhist writers like Śāntideva perhaps ignored this step because of the obvious difficulty of fulfilling it: living Buddhas are few and far between, appearing once in an eon.

On the other hand, there is a tradition among some Vedāntins that if one holds to an intense desire for the welfare of other beings, that desire itself will form the basis of a continuing personhood after illumination. This is the belief among Mahāyāna Buddhists also. Therefore the aspiring Bodhisattva is told to kindle that desire into an all-consuming fire from the very beginning of his career.

In further support of this idea we can refer to such spiritual authorities as Swami Turiyananda and Swami Brahmananda, great disciples of Sri Ramakrishna whose authority lay in direct experience.

In a remarkable letter to Swami Sharvananda, Swami Turiyananda wrote:

Liberation is assured when you know Him. Then there is no more bondage. After death, whether you take another body or not depends upon your own wish. Those who want Nirvāṇa will consider this world as a dream. They will attach their minds to Brahman the Impersonal, and will be merged in that great Light. And

those who want to dwell in devotion to the Lord will consider this world a manifestation of His power. They will attach themselves to the Lord who is Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute. They will not be afraid to be born again and again, and be His playmates in His Divine Play. They will take delight in the Atman and be devoted to the Lord without asking anything in return. They will not accept Nirvāṇa if it is offered to them.

Admittedly, this speaks not of Bodhisattva's ideal but of the devotional ideal of returning again and again as God's playmate. Since, however, it does point to the possibility of a renunciation of final Nirvāṇa for an alternate ideal, surely it supports the Bodhisattva's ideal as well.

And are the two ideals really so different—the ideal of returning to be God's playmate and the ideal of returning out of a universal, liberating love for all beings? For it has to be remembered that the Bodhisattva's cosmic sacrifice is not inspired by a sense of mundane duty, nor is it undergone with a grim sense of determination. It is a sacrifice of the limited joys and sorrows of this little individual life for the unexcelled bliss of universal life, inspired by the experience of intense love for all existence.

As Swami Vivekananda says, speaking of this ideal from the Vedāntic standpoint:

The moment you isolate yourself, everything hurts you. The moment you expand and feel for others, you gain help. The selfish man is the most miserable in the world. The happiest is the man who is not at all selfish. He has become the whole creation... We live in one body. We have some pain, some pleasure. Just for this little pleasure we have by living in this body, we are ready to kill everything in the universe to preserve ourselves. If we had two bodies, would not that be much better? So on and on to bliss. I am in everybody. Through all hands I work; through all feet I walk.... Infinite my bodies, infinite my minds.... What an ecstasy of joy!...¹³

13. *Complete Works*, vol. 2 (1971), pp. 465, 469.

With this spirit the Bodhisattva turns his back on Nirvāṇa and seeks a continual sacrifice of love for the universal.

In the life of Swami Brahmananda we find further support for the practicability of the Bodhisattva ideal:

During his stay at Lake Kusum, Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda] had the habit of rising at midnight and spending the rest of the night in meditation. One night, however, he felt tired and overslept. After a while, someone gave him a push and aroused him.... He saw a luminous figure, in the dress of a Vaishnava saint, standing beside him and counting his beads. After this, the figure appeared almost every night...and joined him in his meditation. Later, in describing this incident to his disciples, Maharaj remarked: 'Many holy men, after leaving the physical body, live in subtle, spiritual bodies, and help earnest religious aspirants in different ways.'¹⁴

Such holy men are actually living the Bodhisattva ideal.

However, probably no one takes up the

¹⁴ Swami Prabhavananda, *The Eternal Companion* (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1970), pp. 46-47.

Bodhisattva ideal because it is so rational and consistent and provable. It would seem to be more a necessity of the heart. For those great souls in whom arises a vast love for all beings, who experience an identity with the whole universe, for them we can at least imagine that questions of consistency and proof and tradition would carry little importance. They would feel an urge to offer themselves as an oblation on the altar of the cosmos, for the love of all existence, for the welfare of all beings.

Having made his vow or *praṇidhāna*, the Bodhisattva has now ascended the altar and is ready to begin his *carya* or career, a career of cosmic sacrifice, fulfilling its requirements until Bodhi is attained. At that point the aspirant joins, according to tradition, the company of the 'celestial' or perfected Bodhisattvas who work ceaselessly for the welfare of all beings from their state of spiritual exultation.

The Bodhisattva's *carya* or career which leads to that perfection consists of the six *pāramitās* or perfections, which will be described in a future article.

MARXIAN PRAXIS AND NISHKAMA KARMA

MEERA CHAKRAVORTY

Meaning of Praxis

In modern times Karl Marx is well known as one of the great masters of political economy. With the unravelling of literature which young Marx wrote, one is surprised to see that Marx's progress in the field of metaphysics, had he pursued it, would have been equally significant. In his youth Marx was influenced by Hegelian metaphysics, just as in his later life he was

away from it. His reaction to Hegelianism is very patent in his idea of 'Praxis'. Between 1839 and 1845 he had done much of his thinking on Praxis, but unfortunately, 'he himself, after his youthful writings, ceased to understand himself in this way'.¹

Praxis is a Greek term rendered as an

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963) p. 53.

activity which has its goal within itself, contrasted with *poiesis* or 'production' which aims at bringing into existence something apart from the activity itself. Though a precise Marxian definition of Praxis is not possible, since Marx did not clarify it, yet it can be seen that his criticism of religion, philosophy and economics is influenced much by the idea of Praxis. Says Merleau-Ponty:

What Marx calls 'Praxis' is the meaning which works itself out spontaneously in the intercrossing of those activities by which man organizes his relations with nature and with other men.... It is ... the analysis of the past and the present which enables us to perceive in outline a logic in the course of things which does not so much guide it from the outside as emanate from within it, and which will be achieved only if men understand their experience and will to change it.²

Nathan Rotenstreich, one of the commentators of Marx, emphasizes a similar meaning when he says about Praxis or Practice:

Practice ... gives rise to historical life in that it produces the actual dynamics of that life ... practice is what creates given human reality and by the same token extricates human reality from the given situation and overturns it by revolution ... it is the force that carries man ... to a new historical reality, the reality of freedom.³

In his 'Thesis on Feurbach' Marx himself uses Praxis as the criterion of truth: 'In practice man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking'.⁴ Praxis became for Marx

the context for his 'ruthless criticism of all existing conditions'.

Dimensions of Praxis

From the above, it is possible to derive three dimensions of Praxis: praxis in the context of 'actuality of existing conditions', praxis as 'criticism and as the means for extricating human reality from the given situation,' and praxis as 'creating history at a new level'. Thus Praxis in one sense is the problem and, in the other, a means of solving it.

The actuality of existing conditions as Praxis arose for Marx when he found himself disillusioned by Hegelian Idealism which he had cherished for a long time. The inherent conflict between 'the intellectual and the physical principle' in man perturbed him very much. This conflict had to be resolved, otherwise man would not be able to face life. Marx failed to get an answer to this from Hegelianism. This is evident from his letter to his father in 1837 in which he says: 'A curtain has fallen, my holy of holies has been shattered and new gods have to be found'.⁵ He was so perturbed that not only was he 'awake many a night', but 'because of my vexation, I was for several days unable to think'.⁶ He thought a possible way out of this conflict was through Praxis as 'criticism'.

The absence of freedom in Hegelian Idealism became the actual existing condition against which Marx was now to revolt. Hegel was far away from reality since his idea of 'State as the unity of universal and particular' was coming in the way of human freedom. The particular individual

2. Ibid pp. 50-51.

3. Nathan Rotenstreich, *Basic Problems of Marx's Philosophy* (New York: The Bobbs-Merill Company Inc. 1965) pp. 37-38; 41-42.

4. 'In der Praxis muss der mensech die wahreit, das heimate die Wirk linchkeit and Macht, die Disseitigkeit seines Denkens beweisen'. Marx, 'Thesis on Feurbach', *Selected Works*, Vol. 1. p. 13.

5. Lo ed. and t: *ophy and Society*, (New York: Dobleday and Company Inc. 1967) p. 46.

6. Ibid., p. 47

interest was strangled, and therefore, it was impossible to reconcile with the Hegelian doctrine of 'freedom'. Marx pointed out that 'Hegel poses an unresolved antinomy. On the one side, external necessity, on the other side, immanent goal. The unity of the State as universal end and goal with the particular interests of individual is to mean that their duties and their right in regard to the State are identical.'⁷ This identity was superfluous and false, as it cut the roots of freedom of the individual. The 'silence of the crowd' which 'obeys its stomach' was enough evidence of the existing condition of humanity. He visualized that 'the existence of a suffering mankind that thinks and of a thinking mankind that is suppressed'⁸ could be totally changed through Praxis alone. Here Praxis is 'ruthless in the sense that criticism is not afraid of its findings and just as little afraid of the conflicts with the powers that are'.⁹

For this emancipation two changes were necessary: 'change in the circumstance' and 'self change'. 'Self change', Marx saw, would act as an 'igniting spark' to bring about a social change. Self-change is possible through work or labour, and labour, for Marx, should be an expression of individual freedom. Marx affirms, 'My work would be a free expression of my life and therefore free enjoyment of my life.... In work the peculiarity of my work would have been affirmed since it is my individual work.... And finally my labour can only appear in my object as what it is according to its nature. It cannot appear as what it is not.'¹⁰ Therefore,

labour gives rise to 'true actuality'; through it man is taken out of his suppressed 'existing actuality' to a new atmosphere of freedom. He finds himself anew in his production since it is his own creation. The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as 'revolutionary practice'.¹¹

The human being is an individual and social being and seeks the fulfilment of his being in the extraneous objects of nature. Since, 'the fact that man is an embodied, living, real, silent, objective being means that he has real sensuous objects as the objects of his life-expression.'¹²

The extraneous objects, though independent of man's existence, are needed by man and hence indispensable for him. They are thus related to him in so far as they help him make use of his faculties. This relationship is manifest when man is involved in his activity that is labour or production. 'Men create and produce their communal nature by their natural action, they produce their social being which is no abstract, universal power over against single individuals, but the nature of each individual, his own activity, his own enjoyment, his own wealth'.¹³

Marx sees the integration of man's individual and social being 'in the process of production'. This integral human being would really reveal the essence of responsibility in totality. As Marx says: 'In your enjoyment or use of my product, I would have had the direct enjoyment of realizing that I had both satisfied a human need by my work and also objectified the human essence and, therefore, fashioned for

7. Ibid., p. 154

8. Ibid., p. 210 ff.

9. *Selected Works*, 1. p. 344

10. 'On James Mill' (Excerpt Notes of 1844) in *Karl Marx: Early Texts*, Tr. & ed. David McLellah (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971) p. 202 f.

11. 'Thesis on Feurbach', *Selected Works*, Vol. I, p. 14

12. Marx: 'Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law', tr. Easton. p. 251.

13. 'On James Mill' *op. cit.* p. 193 f.

another human being the object that met his need.¹⁴

Here Marx has emphasized the dynamic nature of history in Praxis. History is envisaged in man as a social being. According to Marx, 'the first premise of all human existence, and therefore of all history, is the premise that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to make history.'¹⁵ To satisfy his needs man produces; thus production becomes a historical act. But, Marx warns, the moment the worker produces more than he needs, as for example in bourgeois society, his 'natural relationship' with the world of external objects comes to an end. He gets alienated from his work which was so far spontaneous and natural, and what belonged to his essence now is no more his and thus the moment of Praxis ceases to exist.

Praxis and niṣkāma karma

Praxis finds a parallel in the concept of Niṣkāma Karma in the Bhagavad-Gita, though a complete identification of the two ideas may not be possible. In the Gita Arjuna is depicted as the embodiment of the strife between 'the intellectual and the physical principle' in man. He is not himself, since he is not free. He is oscillating between attachment and self abnegation. Arjuna, symbolizes the human species. Suppression and misery have compelled him to live below the level of human beings. Kṛṣṇa points out this inherent 'existing actuality' man is ever in. Unlike Praxis, Niṣkāma Karma itself does not become the 'existing actuality' here, though it is the means as well as the end of the suffering human being.

The other phase of Praxis as criticism also can possibly be traced. Kṛṣṇa rebukes

Arjuna for belittling himself: it is man alone who is responsible for dehumanization, since man overlooks both the responsibility as well as the ability of realizing himself fully as a human being. As man owes certain responsibilities towards his existence, he should do his best to fulfil those responsibilities, but he is often seen shirking them (as Arjuna tried to do) and thus becomes a fallen man. Kṛṣṇa's scornful attitude is clearly brought out in the phrase *anārya-juṣṭam*.¹⁶ He points out that man can save himself from falling if he possesses right attitude—the attitude of detachment or *asaṅga*. This is the context of Niṣkāma Karma, or work without expecting return, which would make man detached and thus in turn free him from the inherent strife. Through Niṣkāma Karma he would be able to get back to his essence, his naturalness.¹⁷ Like Marx, Kṛṣṇa also points out that, since in such a condition his act would be spontaneous (i.e. without any motivation), it would be his state of humanization, it would be his real nature. Kṛṣṇa coaxes Arjuna to become man by fighting the battle, not for the kingdom but for the fulfilment of a far greater responsibility, of 'extricating human reality from the given situation'. But the noteworthy point is that in the Marxian context, the 'absolute' of the Hegelian idealism fails to provide salvage to man, while the 'absolute' of the Gita is the only way to redeem man.

The integrated individual social being of Marx is equally given importance in the Gita. Gita says one should cooperate for world-solidarity or *lokasaṅgraha*.

While referring to this concept of *lokasaṅgraha* in the Gita, Dr. Radhakrishnan very appropriately remarks, 'The

14. Ibid., p. 202

15. Easton, p. 144

16. Gita II, 2.

17. Referred to in Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra* (1.3) as *svarūpa*.

Gita recognizes that it is through work that we are brought into relation with the rest of the world.¹⁸ Marx surprisingly is very much near this concept when he says that 'men who daily remake their own life, begin to make other men....'¹⁹ This implies that the concept of Nişkāma Karma is also in tune with the idea of Praxis in perceiving man as the maker of history.

Though Marx does not aim at meta-physical achievements, yet human freedom is his primary concern. He insists that labour for labour's sake can alone manifest man's freedom, rather than the labour with the expectation of production. The latter not only narrows down the scope of freedom but ruins his being. The expectation of production would keep him in bondage. The more he aspires for production the more he would be away from himself, and would turn himself into an object or 'commodity' shorn of all human qualities. Marx is pained to see that 'the depreciation of the human world progresses in direct proportion to the increase in value of the world of things'.²⁰

In the Gita too there is a stern warning against expectation for one's action; man is entitled to action alone and to nothing beyond it: *karmanye vādīkāraste, mā*

phaleṣu kadācana.²¹ Neither should he become a means for achieving the fruit of action: *mā karmaphalahetur bhūh*.²² Therefore detachment or Nişkāma Karma becomes a necessary condition in both the contexts of the Gita and also of Praxis. Marx has warned against the greed of the bourgeois society; and Gita says: 'Offer all your actions to me, and take rest in the Atman, crush hope and the ego, and fight, rid of all doubts.'²³

Both Praxis and Nişkāma Karma, it is clear, aim at human freedom. Both aim at saving man from being dehumanized. The Gita expressly asks man to refrain from attachment. Marx asks him to be apathetic regarding the outcome of labour. Nevertheless, both are concerned not with expectations or fruits of production but with the principle of freedom basically as derived from Karma or Praxis.

After his early thinking on Praxis, Marx traversed a long way. Young Marx was metamorphosed through his revised views into a revolutionary political theorist. Unfortunately, Marx could not afford to be philosophic. The sharp contrast in human reality compelled him to abandon his philosophical view and to look more down to the earth.

18. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1923) Vol. I. p. 566.

19. M.E.G.A. I 1.1.

20. 'On James Mill', *op. cit.*, p. 202.

21. Gita I. 47

22. Ibid.

23. *Gītā*, III. 30. Tr. P. Lal (Calcutta: Writers' Workshop).

Those who give themselves up to the Lord do more for the world than all the so-called workers. One man who has purified himself thoroughly, accomplishes more than a regiment of preachers. Out of purity and silence comes the word of power.

—Swami Vivekananda

NIVEDITA AND HER TIMES

(A Review Article)

[LETTERS OF SISTER NIVEDITA VOLS. I AND II: EDITED BY SANKARI PRASAD BASU. Published by Nababharat Publishers, 72 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Calcutta 700 009. 1982. Pp. 1287. Rs. 160 (per set)]

In these two sumptuously produced massive volumes, containing 802 letters written by Sister Nivedita plus 90 letters written by some of her eminent friends to her, we have an important historical document covering the crucial initial period (1898-1911) of India's political resurgence. An invaluable source-material for researchers, scholars, patriots and general readers, these letters reveal many unknown and interesting facts about India under the Viceroy, Curzon, Minto and Hardinge and about some of the social lights of that period.

But the greatest value and charm of these letters lie in the fact that they afford rare glimpses into some of the poignantly human aspects of Swami Vivekananda's personality and the difficult situations that Swamiji faced with silent courage. Among those written during Swamiji's lifetime there is hardly any letter which does not directly or indirectly refer to Swamiji. The extraordinarily pure, noble and tender relationship that existed between Swamiji and his spiritual daughter runs all through the letters like a refreshing clear stream. No reader of these letters can remain unimpressed by Nivedita's unflinching loyalty to her Guru and to India. It will provide a powerful source of inspiration to the reader of these letters.

Though my primary intention in going through this book was to 'review' it, it proved to be such absorbing interest that my work soon became one of personal exploration. For my own personal benefit I found it necessary to keep track of the

main strands of thought and to weave them into a coherent narrative, and this is what I wish to present to the reader here.

While Nivedita addresses only four letters to Swami Vivekananda, in the two-year period between 1899 and 1900, there is hardly any letter in which she does not express her admiration verging on worship and her love, affection and concern for her Master. Of the four letters mentioned here, two were written in 1899 while the other two were written in 1900. These letters provide an index of the warm relationship between the Master and the disciple. I shall mention here only Nivedita's mode of addressing the Master in the beginning of the letter and her mode of signing herself at the conclusion of the letter. In the first letter she addresses him as 'My dear King' and signs herself in conclusion as 'Your Daughter Nivedita'. The second letter addresses Swami Vivekananda as 'My dear Father' and ends with signing as 'Your daughter, Margot'. In the third letter Nivedita addresses Swamiji as 'My beloved Father' and signs herself simply as 'Margot', while in the fourth Nivedita calls Swamiji 'My dearest Father' and ends the letter with 'Ever your most loving daughter, Margot'.

The relationship between the disciple and the Master is beautifully expressed when Nivedita writes: 'He is to me a mother and child in one. Oh, what can life be to others who are not called to worship the Greatest soul on Earth'. (p. 184). If Nivedita's love for her Guru was that of a child for its father, she at times felt that

Swamiji was a child himself. 'I feel as if he were a baby' (p. 116), 'but scratch, and all the manliness shines out—in an instant.' (P. 114).

Swamiji's mission was to bring *manliness* to his people. He never wanted money or power or anything but persons. 'Give me men! Give me men!' (p. 175), he said over and over again. He believed that with just half a dozen disciples endowed with spiritual love for humanity he could conquer the whole world. Such assertion of Swamiji was consistent with his conception of world history: 'The history of the world is the history of a few earnest men, and when one man is in earnest the world must just come to his feet.' (P. 80).

As a cultural revolutionary, Swami Vivekananda's ultimate aim was to kindle in every man that sense of freedom in a new era of humanity when every man will be free to do good. As Swamiji himself said to Nivedita: 'We have not *seen* humanity yet—and when that era dawns there will be no line of least resistance—for *everyone* will be free to do good.' (P. 82).

While such was his ultimate aim, he was not oblivious of the immediate practical problems facing individual men or nations. Man-making was his work, but he thought that he could do that work better by 'giving them bread to eat and with necessities available than without' (p. 73). He foresaw the possibility of a Śūdra (proletarian) revolution and warned that the world had to pass through 'the great tumults, the terrible tumults' of the Śūdra revolution if the world did not pay greater attention to solving the problems of the Śūdra. (P. 215). Swamiji asked people not to forget one basic truth: 'All accumulations are for subsequent distribution.' (P. 357).

Was Swamiji's mission taken kindly at home and abroad? While Swamiji had innumerable admirers like Mr. and Mrs. Padshan, Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss J.

MacLeod, there were also some detractors like Miss Muller¹ who spread lies about him. At home persons like Dr. J. C. Bose were particularly critical of Vivekananda's worship of Sri Ramakrishna. Referring to this, Bose once remarked that 'the man who had been a hero had become the leader of a new sect.'² In response to such charges, Nivedita, whose affection for Bose was second only to that for Swamiji, would persuasively ask Bose, 'Don't you see this man is so large that as long as you are faithful to truth and to yourself, you cannot be in antagonism to him?' (P. 417).

Far more vehement was the criticism of Miss Sarola Ghosal, a grand-daughter of Debendranath Tagore. Just to show how puerile her criticisms were, one remark of hers is given here: 'Swami had good ideas—plenty—but he carried nothing out. Other people had tried agricultural reform. He only talked.' Nivedita tried her best to correct her. She also very much disliked Sarola's habit of bragging about her own family. 'This worship of her own family is very irritating', she wrote. (P. 131).

Swami Vivekananda's two responses to these criticisms were characteristic of him. First, he said, 'These people who think themselves so free of me are more abjectly mine than any other, if they only knew!' (P. 150). Secondly, he pointed out to Nivedita, 'When people come into the world to serve an idea, Margot, they have to make their own material too. They must not expect to find people ready to listen.' (P. 155).

So far as his Ramakrishna-worship was

1. Swamiji himself felt that Miss Muller was 'extremely selfish'. Sister Nivedita observes, 'And surely it is true'. Letter dated May 15, 1899.

2. P. 103. In fairness to Bose, it must be mentioned that, on the death of Swamiji, he acknowledged Swamiji's greatness believing that 'his deeds and teachings will walk the earth and waken and strengthen'.

concerned, Vivekananda explained that at first he himself had been sceptical of Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences. But gradually Ramakrishna conquered him with his overpowering love.³ And then, said Swamiji, 'I thought him the purest man I had ever seen, and I new that he loved me as my own father and mother had not power to do.' (P. 156). Swamiji further explained that ever since Ramakrishna dedicated him to Kālī he believed that Kālī guided 'me in every little thing I do—and just does what she likes with me.' (P. 156).

While Swamiji took stoically the criticisms of him by other people, he was immensely pained to witness the wicked behaviour of some of his erstwhile family members. While his aunt was the villain of the piece, one of his younger brothers also proved to be very disobedient and treacherous. Swamiji relates to Nivedita how he used to starve to feed this brother who was then a baby. (P. 150). They went to the length of filing a lawsuit against Swamiji. Nivedita regretfully observes, 'His (Swamiji's) family members have *no* reverence for him—none—they look upon him as a mere breadwinner'. (P. 154). And yet how dearly Swami Vivekananda loved his mother! During his journey for his second visit to the West he regretted the anguish his *sannyās* had caused his mother and had even talked of coming back and devoting the rest of his life to his mother. (P. 172).

Swamiji would occasionally get into such moods of despair, wearing an awful look of being lost on his face. During his moods of despair, he would say, 'I am never going to teach anymore. Who am I, that I should teach anyone?' (P. 25) He would even say, 'Swamiji is dead and gone.' (P. 25). During such depressions, he would long

for a return to the feet of Ramakrishna: 'And so to Thee—Ramakrishna—I betake myself. For in Thy feet alone is the Refuge of Man.' (P. 227-28). Thus would he rise above his moods of despair, becoming as ever a great spring of healing and knowledge to the world. (P. 26).

Swamiji had asthma. His suffering was particularly acute in 1899. His chest was always sore all over with neuralgic pain. Nivedita was so much anxious over the health of Swamiji that she got his horoscope recalculated and was comforted to know that the evil influence of 'Rāhu' which was causing Swamiji loss of health would end on the 6th of December, 1899 and that Swamiji had nine years still to run of the influence of Jupiter. Nivedita reasoned that no man could die while Jupiter ruled his life and therefore Swamiji's life was safe for nine years to come.⁴ How did Swamiji react when Nivedita told him of her anxiety and his horoscope? To quote Nivedita: 'He (Swamiji) burst forth, "Not another word of superstition. We are going to sweep it all away and make place for Advaitism pure and simple."' (P. 108).

In the words of Swami Vivekananda (as recorded by Nivedita) Advaitism teaches us that 'the final essence of things is Unity. We see many, yet there is but one Existence. ... These distinctions which we so love are all parts of one Infinite fact and

4. Nivedita writes: 'I am selfish enough to want to keep him at all costs. Blessed be the earth he treads on'. (P. 118). Another letter written by this dedicated lady brings out her anxiety over Guru's health even more poignantly: 'Life has been torture to him, and I would not ask him to endure it long or merely for our pleasure but ... if I should die a thousand death hereafter in a thousand flaming hells—I implore—no, I demand—of the Supreme—that I be allowed to win and lay some laurels at his feet while he is yet with us. If God have indeed a Mother's heart—surely we cannot be refused this boon!' (P. 235).

3. This was love mixed with reverence. Sri Ramakrishna had a kind of veneration for Swami Vivekananda. See P. 58.

that one Infinite fact is the attainment of Freedom.' (P. 356). Basically, it is this knowledge based on the Vedanta philosophy that Swamiji preached to the people in the East and the West. In that sense, as Nivedita rightly opines, Swamiji 'was not only one of the great historic teachers of the East, but in my view also of the West.' (P. 298). True to his teaching, he established the Order of Ramakrishna with the avowed aim of realizing the highest ideals of the East and the West.

What is civilization? Swami Vivekananda would answer that it was the feeling of the divine within. Religion, to him, was not any dogma but only a means of realizing the Divine-in-man and, as such, religion was only an aid to civilization. Swami Vivekananda was basically an awakener of souls. The queen of his adoration was, no doubt, his motherland, but, above all, he was a vindicator of humanity. If he had any fault, it was the fault of attempting too much. As he himself said, 'My great fault is attempting too much'. (P. 111). He was burning himself at both ends. The end to an all-too-brief life inevitably came on the 4th of July, 1902.

On the event of death itself, Nivedita writes in her inimitable language:

He worked very hard, spending more than 3 hours in meditation, and teaching and talking to one and another all day. At $\frac{1}{2}$ past four a special message reached Calcutta from him that he had never felt so well. About that time, he went out for a walk and walked two miles—a great deal here. Then he came into his room and dismissed everyone. He wanted to meditate. After about an hour, he was tired, and lay down, calling a boy to fan him. Half an hour later, a trembling of hand, crying as if in a dream, and some irregular breathing made the lad call the house—but when they reached his side, he was already gone. Everything points to great Samadhi. He left everything in order. Everything at peace and in the moment of his greatest strength, quietly, of his own will he left us. (P. 478)

Before concluding this section I would like to refer to Nivedita's standing in the religious circle in which she moved. Margaret E. Noble (as Nivedita was then called) was initiated by Swami Vivekananda into the vow of perpetual chastity (*brahmacharya*) and received the name Nivedita from him. She became a novice of the Ramakrishna Order. But some time after the passing away of Swamiji, she was advised by the senior monks of the Order to sever her connection with the Ramakrishna Mission formally, which she did. This gave her the freedom she needed for political work.

II

In the second section of this essay, I shall discuss Nivedita's attitude to politics in the then British India. Her main concern was to develop a national thought-dimension in India. But Nivedita was not a mere thinker and preacher of Indian unity. She was an activist. She fought for the independence of India. She was involved in the extremist politics and had connection with the revolutionary groups in Bengal led by Aurobindo Ghosh and others. Nivedita believed that the foreign rule in India produced 'moral degradation' and 'despicable enervation', and for anyone saying that India required foreign rule amounted in Nivedita's opinion to speaking 'a blasphemy against humanity. That is one political opinion to which I would be utterly intolerant.' (P. 447). As she honestly believed in the right of India to be India, the right of India to think for herself, the right of India to knowledge, her right to bread, and to justice, (p. 540), she was regarded by the British government as a traitor to her own race. And if she escaped arrest by the British police, it was probably because Lady Minto happened to be her friend. The British police, however, took

the liberty of opening her letters, prompting her to say: 'It is so uncomfortable to feel that I cannot express myself at all affectionately or freely because I have received a warning that the police have taken authority to open my letters, and I do not care to write... for their eyes. The very possibility puts a restraint.' (P. 458).

Nivedita traces the genesis of unrest in Bengal to some features of Curzon's policy and to some of his intemperate utterances about the character of Indian people. She identifies in particular Curzon's Universities Bill, his convocation speech⁵, and his measure on the partition of Bengal⁶. 'My view is', Nivedita writes, 'that it was the Education Bill that did the work—the convocation speech that roused the spirit—and partition that opened war.' (P. 935). Calling Curzon 'a fool', Nivedita observes 'A good rider would know when to make positive love to his horse. But all hours are hours with this man for hit and spur.' (P. 974). Every measure that Curzon took was, in Nivedita's opinion, 'oppressive and tyrannical, and aimed at the undermining of the faculty for liberty.' She sums up her judgement of Curzon by calling him 'a dreadful Viceroy' who will 'stand in history as the most anti-British influence that India ever saw.'⁷

5. In his speech delivered at the convocation of the Calcutta University in February, 1905, Curzon made a reflection on the character of the Indian people by calling them untruthful. (P. 721).

6. Curzon partitioned Bengal into two provinces of Eastern Bengal and Western Bengal on the ground of administrative convenience in October, 1905. It was suspected that his real motive was to destroy the unity of the Bengalis. The measure threw Bengal into waves of agitation against the government.

7. *Letters* (P. 540). Mention should be made here of the Bodh Gaya temple case of 1904 in which Nivedita and Curzon found themselves on the opposite sides of the barricade. The temple at Bodh Gaya was under the control of a Shaiva Mohant. Anagarika Dharmapala laid a claim

Nivedita is more kind in her opinion of Minto who succeeded Curzon in the office of Viceroy. She regrets that poor Minto had to suffer the consequences of many of Curzon's injudicious policies. He had to deal with boycott, swadeshi, and political terrorism. The means he adopted made a bad situation even more complicated: the press was gagged; the Seditious Meetings Act was extended to stop all public meetings; the expenditure on secret services in Bengal alone was made to rise to Rs. 100 lakhs a year, (P. 1120), and severe governmental repression was let loose on the political terrorists. As Nivedita writes, 'I fancy the poor man (Minto) is unnerved by all he has passed through—while that fool of a Curzon continues to babble! I wonder he does not hide his head! Does he think poor little *Minto* is responsible for the new condition?' (P. 1065).

If Nivedita was severe in her indictment of Curzon and sympathetic in her assessment of Minto, she was not hopeful of Hardinge, the Viceroy who succeeded Minto. She writes, 'I can tell you that it will go hard with us all, when Hardinge rules! That steel-trap looking face, and familiarity with Russia!!!' (P. 1119).

So much for Nivedita's opinion of the Viceroys of India. We now turn to Nivedita's attitude to the freedom fighters of India. Her letters bring out in unmistakable terms her agony at the sufferings of

to the temple on behalf of the Buddhists. Curzon decided in favour of restoring the temple to the Buddhists and excluding the Hindus from worshipping in it. Nivedita joined issue with Curzon by making the temple case an issue of national unity. She denied that Buddhism was a religion separate from Hinduism. Her newspaper editorials and continuous campaign against what she called the sectarian move of the government created such public agitations that the move was foiled. See *Letters*, P. 605.

these fighters. The cases of Satyendra Nath Bose, Kanai Lal Dutt, Krishna Kumar Mitra, and Duttagupta find special mention in her letters.

Nivedita relates how the old Brahmo leader Siva Nath Shastri gave spiritual consolation to Satyendra Nath Bose before he was hanged, and how the British government refused similar service on the part of Shastri to Kanai Lal Dutt. 'Surely it is not usual to refuse a priest to the condemned!' she observes (P. 993).

Nivedita finds the manner of Krishna Kumar Mitra's arrest revolting: 'It makes your blood boil.' The police simply left a message with his family that the superintendent at the thana wanted to have a few words with him. A trusting Mitra walked to the thana in good faith and the inevitable happened. When his son saw him in jail and wrote about the poor conditions in which he was kept, the things were made even more severe for Mitra. Mitra *silently* bore his suffering and never, on principle, asked for any favour from the British administration, but his family and children were utterly smitten down by his removal. When Mitra was released from Jail, an overjoyed Nivedita wrote, 'I feel as if my own father were coming home.' (P. 1051).

Nivedita gives an even more moving account of a boy named Duttagupta. Not being able to weaken the resolve of the boy, the police requisitioned the service of one Brown of Oxford Mission. Brown used his spiritual and sentimental influence over this boy to worm out of him all he knew. After extorting a signed confession at the dead of night, the arrangement for the hanging of the boy was made. Nivedita's heart-felt sympathy for this unfortunate boy comes out when she writes 'Poor boy! In what torture of mind the soul must have fled.' (P. 1072). Nivedita believes that terrorism was a natural outgrowth of such tortures by the police. 'How can people

sit still under such things?', she asks (P. 1007).

In order to show to what length the vindictiveness of the governing race and of its legal system had gone, Nivedita mentions two incidents. In July 1910, about one hundred weavers in the district of Midnapore were arrested for weaving a certain Bengali song into the borders of *dhotis*. This was considered to be a publication of seditious nature! The second incident is no less ridiculous. C. R. Das was about to be deported for the 'offence' of sending money to one who was not in the good book of the police! (P. 1126).

This account would remain incomplete without a mention of how Nivedita herself was watched by the police. She was thought to be the inspiration behind all the political dacoities. 'I think it only meant that they would suppress me also, if they could', (P. 1119) Nivedita wrote in July, 1910. The voice that could not be suppressed by the British police was stilled by death in less than a year and a half of uttering the above-quoted words.

Nivedita gave her all to India. Her point of view was the Indian point of view. Her ambition was to make a nation out of India. 'My ambition is nation-making'. (P. 678) 'Nationality is the thought I am seeking by all means to popularize'.⁸ Nivedita worked incessantly towards that end. The recent tragedy of

8. P. 791. 'Nationality' was also the goal of Nivedita's educational plans for Indian women: 'The meaning of the word *India* and the place of India in the world together with a burning desire to serve *India, the Soil and the People*, are the things that are recognized as Education for women. These things are the centre. ... How can I serve my country? How? How? How?—should be the cry of every educated woman's heart. P. 1056. The only addition that we would like to make here is that the thought of service to the country should be the cry of every educated man's heart as well.

Punjab only reemphasizes the necessity of following in the footsteps of Nivedita. She could not be more right in her fixation of goal and there is no greater task awaiting India of today than realizing her goal of Indian Nationality.

III

Interesting vignettes and references to several well-known and less-known personalities connected with the Ramakrishna Movement, the British raj, and the changes that were sweeping through religion, art and society in India in the first decade of the present century appear in these letters. They include the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Saradananda, Swami Sadananda, J. C. Bose and his family, Sri Aurobindo, the Tagore family including Rabindranath, Josephine MacLeod, Sara Ole Bull, Swami Ramatirtha and many others. About the Holy Mother, Nivedita says in one place: "The Holy Mother is perfect. Bo⁹ came last night, to touch her feet. Wasn't this nice? All the great nationalists do now—all recognize that the call came through Swamiji—and when I said the other day, "Mother, the day foretold by S.R.K. (Sri Ramakrishna) when you would have too many children, is almost here, for the whole country is yours!"; she said, "I am seeing it." (P. 990).

Finally, it should be mentioned that these

9. Abala Bose, wife of Dr. J. C. Bose; she was a Brahmo by faith.

letters are fine specimens of English literature. They will teach Indians how to express themselves clearly and informally through the English medium in personal letters.

In the Preface Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu has narrated how these letters came to his hands. Lizelle Reymond, the biographer of Nivedita, had deposited more than 500 letters with Sri Anirvan, the great scholar and Yogi. Coming to know of this, Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu went to see Sri Anirvan who immediately turned over the entire collection to him. The remaining letters came from the archives of the Nivedita Girls' School and the private collections of individuals. By compiling, arranging, inserting editorial explanations wherever necessary, and by publishing these priceless letters Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu has laid devotees of the Ramakrishna Movement, scholars, social scientists, lovers of India and the general reading public under a deep debt of gratitude.

Prof. Basu has promised a third volume in which he intends to interlink the events of personalities mentioned in the letters so as to enable the reader to follow the unfolding of the history of the times. We eagerly look forward to the publication of the third volume. The present two volumes have been printed in an attractive and durable format, and the price is not too high.

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REVIEWS AND NOTICES

MY INDIA, MY PEOPLE—SISTER NIVEDITA: BY PRAVRAJKA ATMAPRANA. Published by Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, C-8A Hauz Khas, New Delhi 110 016. 1985. Pp. ix+64. Rs. 6

This booklet, based on the lectures delivered by the author under the auspices of the University of Calcutta, makes a succinct appraisal of Sister Nivedita's work for the rejuvenation of India. It is divided into four chapters. Chapter I gives

an account of Nivedita's services to the weak and debilitated sections of society at the time of natural calamities like plague, famine and flood. Chapter II discusses her work among women, her appreciation of the ideals that guided Indian home life and the motivation behind her work. Chapter III makes an assessment of her contribution to the cause of education. Chapter IV discusses her role in generating the feeling of nationalism among the people.

To Sister Nivedita, India was one living reality. It was not 'old and effete' but young and 'ripe with potentiality'. She exhorted the people to realize the fundamental unity of India and to have faith in their innate power. 'The rank of a nation in humanity', she wrote, 'is determined by the complexity and potentiality of its component parts...Complexity of elements, when duly subordinated to the nationalising influence of place, is a source of strength, and not weakness to a nation.' She repudiated the belief that India was a congeries of races and nationalities before the arrival of the British. 'If India had no unity herself, no unity could be given to her', she argued. 'The unity which undoubtedly belonged to India was self-born and had its own destiny, its own functions, and its own vast powers; it was the gift of no one.'

According to Pravrajika Atmaprana, it was Sister Nivedita who gave the concept of nationality to Indians. 'We in India have a great synthesis, an unparalleled synthesis—full of strength, majesty and potentiality.... It is for the nation to learn its strength...', said Sister Nivedita whose whole life was dedicated to the cause of national awakening.

The booklet, rich in contents and fully documented, lucidly brings out the rare personal qualities of Sister Nivedita—her simplicity, purity, courage, steadfastness and selflessness. Written in a vibrant, ennobling style, the book deserves to be popularized among the youth.

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SANSKRIT-ENGLISH

NITYASUTRANI: BY S. M. BHATKHANDE.
Published by Nityananda Institute of Culture,
23/354 Azadnagar, Jaiprakash Road, Andheri
(W), Bombay 400 058. 1986. Pp. 150. Rs. 50.

Nityananda, the famous saint of Ganeshpuri,

Maharashtra, was born around 1897 as an orphan in the extreme north of Malabar. Nothing is known about his parents. His original name was Raman Kutty, and he was brought up by a well-to-do lawyer by name Ishwara Iyer who once took the boy on a pilgrimage to North India. At Gaya hearing of Buddha's renunciation and illumination, the eight-year-old boy left the party and went to the Himalayas. Eight years later when he reappeared in his native place, he had undergone a tremendous inner transformation and become Nityananda. After the death of Ishwara Iyer, the young saint lived in solitude in some parts of South Karnataka. A few words of wisdom that fell from his mouth during this period were garnered by a pious widow named Tulsi Amma who published them under the title *Cidakasagita* in 1927 in Kannada. It may be noted that Nityananda had never been to school and was illiterate in the worldly sense of the term. In 1935 he moved to Vajreshvari and thence to Ganeshpuri where he lived till the end of his life in 1961. He seldom spoke or gave spiritual instructions. He used to advise people to study the Gita and the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. Spiritual aspirants flocked to him from all over the world, and a big religious institution grew around him.

The author of the book under review, Dr. Bhatkhande who had personal contact with the saint, is a brilliant Sanskrit scholar now working as the Deputy Registrar of Bombay University. He has presented the teachings of Nityananda in the form of *sūtras* (aphorisms), the age-old Indian method of preserving spiritual instruction. Most of the aphorisms are based on the original Kannada book *Cidakasagita* but a few are based on teachings given at Ganeshpuri.

The Sanskrit *sūtras* are clear and simple and can be easily understood by all educated Indians. However, the author has given his own commentary in English on every *sūtra*. There is nothing sectarian about these teachings, and one does not have to be a follower of Nityananda to appreciate them. They deal only with the essential doctrines of traditional Vedantic wisdom such as the nature of the soul, the ultimate goal of life, the indispensability of Guru's guidance, the power of Mantras, the need for renunciation and self-control and so on.

This elegantly printed book is a reliable source of inspiration and guidance to sincere spiritual aspirants.

S.B.